

## **Lost in the Upside Down (REMASTERED) by The Burning Writer**

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**Summary:** Casey Hartley's life was rather uneventful except for Mae and Gregg's crimes, but that all changes when he is literally thrust into an upside down world by the town's secret murder cult. So when you're at the end of everything hold onto anything wither that be your memories of your friends, or your sanity because when life get's strange things change. Forever.

# 1. Falling Upside Down

**FOR ANYONE CONFUSED, I'M REMASTERING THIS STORY IN THE WAY THAT IT'LL BE EASIER TO READ AND NOT THAT THE ACTUAL PLOT IS CHANGED. K'BYE.**

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February 21st, 2015, Michigan, Possum Springs, Mae's Going Away Gathering, Just outside of the bus stop.

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Everybody that Mae knew had showed up to say goodbye to her before she left for college. Gregg, her parents, Casey, and Casey's parents. Mae stood in front of the door that led into the bus stop, she had her usual clothes on, an orange shirt with a slashed zero design in the center of it, her dark brown jeans, and boots, she also had a beige backpack on that held all sorts of items in it for school. She looked at the small crowd of people that had come with her to the bus stop tears starting to form in her eyes slightly before she said "I'm going to miss you all."

Gregg whimpered as tears started to form in his eyes as well, he quickly ran over to Mae and hugged her which took the cat by surprise, he wore a white jacket with blue sleeves, on the back of it was the Possum Springs High School's symbol, he also wore blue jeans, and red high tops sneakers. Gregg had "stolen" the jacket from one of his bullies back in high school, but in reality the bully had just lost it and never cared to go look for it, he squeezed Mae tightly and said "I'll miss you too duder."

Mae returned Gregg's hug before the two let go of each other and Gregg walked back over to where he was standing before. Casey walked over to Mae, even though they were only a year apart in age, Casey being nineteen while Mae was eighteen, he was taller than her which wasn't something new to her due to her being so short "Can't believe you're going to colleague before me."

He wore a black hoodie jacket, blue jeans, and black sneakers. Mae shrugged which made something in her back pack to move around "You just haven't put any effort into it. You're much smarter than

me."

Casey chuckled "That might be true, but either way. I'm very happy for you."

Mae rubbed her left eye as her tears began to build up "Thanks Casey."

She then motioned for Casey to bend down so she could give him a good and hearty hug. After she finished hugging Casey he walked back to his parents' side and both Casey's and Mae's parents spoke in unison "We are very proud of you Mae."

Mae smiled and took in a deep breath "Okay here I go. See you guys latter."

She then turned around and walked inside of the bus stop heading for the bus that would take her to college, as the bus pulled out of the bus stop to get on the high way everyone waved at Mae as it went by Gregg being the most enthusiastic out of them all. After the bus left the sight of everyone Mae's parents said goodbye to everyone and got in their car to head home, Mae's parents offered to take Gregg home but he told them no saying "I've got a bike, that's how I got here first."

He then hopped onto his bike and headed home leaving Casey and his parents alone at the bus stop. Casey's dad faced Casey "You need a ride home?"

Casey shook his head "Nah... I'm gonna spend the night with one of my friends."

His mom sighed "Just don't stay at Steve Scriggins's place. You know we don't approve of you sleeping at his house."

Casey chuckled "I won't... Besides his house is getting fumigated tonight so I couldn't even if I wanted to."

His dad grew a confused look on his face "Where are you going to stay then?"

Casey put his hands in the pockets of his hoodie and shrugged "I'm

gonna stay over at Jack's place."

His mom winced "Baby, that's all the way out in the woods! Past the Food Donkey! Are you sure?"

Casey sighed "Yeah I'm sure. And yes I'll be fine."

His mom nodded her head slowly "Alright... Just don't go anywhere near those train tracks!"

Casey laughed "I will... See you guys tomorrow."

His parents both said goodbye before getting in their car and driving home. Casey made the long journey to his friend's house all the way out in the woods, the house was built by Jack's dad when he thought that the government was going to invade Possum Springs for what they did in the Worker's Revolution or something like that. He made it through the entire town without much excitement, he walked alongside the train tracks that ran along the outskirts of town and where next to the Food Donkey despite his mother telling him not to, the Food Donkey's lights were still on and people were still getting food and various other items before the store closed for the night, that store had been open since before Casey was ever born and he believed that it would stay open well after his death sometime in the future. He walked into the forest that surrounded all of Possum Springs and most of the surrounding area for several miles, he pulled out a small flash light he kept in his hoodie pocket and turned it on so he could navigate through the dark forest.

It would take him an hour or two before he would get to his friend's house so he sat down on a tree stump and pulled out a meth pipe and a lighter that he kept in his jean pockets for times like these, just before he was about to smoke some of the pipe he heard very loud rustling behind, he turned around and saw nothing he then faced forwards again and attempted to smoke the pipe when he heard more rustling from in front of him, he stood up in anger "Okay this isn't funny who's out there?" he flipped the lighter one and used its flame to see in front of him and also possibly burn whatever was causing the rustling if it was aggressive, suddenly someone grabbed him from behind covering his mouth and grabbed the one that had the lighter in it.

Casey started to strongly resist who ever it was, he tried to kick, bite, and burn the person that was standing behind him when suddenly several people emerged from the bushes in front of Casey, they all wore red dark red hooded jackets and black masks that covered their faces, the jackets reach down to their knees as well "Good job Eide. That's was the best sneaking you've ever done!"

The person that was talking seemed to be the person standing in front of Casey and the person behind Casey must've been that Eide guy, who then said "Thanks. But can we hurry this up? My hands are starting to cramp from resisting his resistance."

The person in front of him rolled his eyes "Fine... Lurv you know what to do."

The person that stood next to who Casey now thought was the leader walked over to Casey and pulled out a damp rag, quickly Eide removed his hands from Casey and Lurv put the rag over Casey's mouth and that caused him to drop his lighter in shock, then Lurv put his other hand behind Casey's head so he couldn't escape. Whatever was on the rag started to take effect and Casey began to become unconscious, he started to yell for help which was muffled and eventually he finally passed out. Casey eventually woke up inside of a cave, in front of him was the same people that abducted him in the woods all still in their identical outfits. Casey tried to move but his hands where bound together by ropes and he was being held down by someone behind him. He took a look around the cave and saw that in the center of it was a large hole and there was even more people in dark red jackets standing on the other side of the hole in front of Casey "Wh- What's going on?"

The person behind him shoved Casey's head down "Shut up."

The person that held Casey down was Eide. After a little bit someone on the other side of the hole walked over to it's edge and faced the side Casey was on "It is time! It is time for us to sacrifice Casey Heartley so that we may prevent the death of our fine town!"

The other people in the cave cheered but Casey didn't join in "Wait what?! You're going to sacrifice me?! Why!?"

The person that Casey thought was the leader of this cult huffed "I won't answer the questions of a drug addict low life."

Casey tried to stand up but Eide held him down again "Say that to my face! I dare you! And tell this Eide guy to loosen his effing grip!"

Eide then kicked Casey in his side causing him to fall over and groan in pain "Heh. Just like every other low life. You talk big words, but you can't back em' up."

Casey coughed and tried to stand up but Eide grabbed him and started to walk over to the hole and the leader raised his hands up into the air while everybody except for Eide lowered their heads "Casey Heartley! You have not and will never become an asset to this town! But all of that changes today! Your sacrifice will prevent Possum Springs from wasting away into nothing but dust and broken dreams! Are! You! Ready!?"

Casey resisted Eide with all of his might but he couldn't stop him from pushing Casey closer to the hole "NO! I'm not ready! I promised Mae that I'd see her when she comes home! I promised Gregg that I'd help him find a boyfriend!... I promised my parents that I'd be home tomorrow! Please! I'm not ready to die!"

The leader lowered his arms and the others raised their heads up "No one is ever ready to die Casey... That is why we must do this. To persevere the town! To return it to it's former glory!... And don't worry about Mae Borowski when she comes home we will take good care of her."

And with that Casey reached the very edge of the hole and Eide pushed him forwards, what happened next looked like it happened in slow motion to Casey. He fell forwards but before his feet left the ground he spun around and tried to grab Eide but his hands literally went right through him, Casey's feet then left the ground as he started to fall farther into the hole, the cultists moved closer to the hole to watch Casey fall, then the last thing he thought of before reality returned to normal speed was, Why? As he fell he could hear wind howling in his ears, tears flying upwards as he fell, the cultists walked away from the hole and Casey could hear themselves congratulate each other. Then he fell so far down the hole that the

entrance began to grow smaller and smaller, until it was only a dot of very dim light. Casey fell for what seemed like forever when he had only been falling for a few seconds but even still this was a really deep hole, Casey was then able to flip over and have his stomach face downwards instead of upwards and he saw that he was rapidly approaching what seemed to be a thin layer of flesh mixed with fungus that covered the bottom of the hole, he looked up towards the entrance but he could no longer see it, in fact it looked like it was never there to begin with.

He then looked back at the strange flesh fungus-thing and saw that he was much closer he raised his hands up to protect his face and he finally hit the layer of strange materiel, he broke right through it like plastic wrap and was flung out of the hole, he tumbled across the ground of the cave covered in the strange materiel that he just broke through he eventually came to a skidding halt which dragged his entire backside across the ground. He just laid there staring up at the ceiling of whatever cave he was inside of, he took several deep breaths and sat up groaning in pain, he checked his body for any kind of bones that had broken removing the strange material from his body as he searched, the material felt like how it looked fleshy, slightly fuzzy, and slimy. Somehow he didn't have any broken bones anywhere but he had to have bruised himself all over, he stood up winching slightly and took a look around the cave he was inside of, it looked exactly like the cave where the cultists had thrown him into the hole except it didn't feel the same, it may have looked the same but it defiantly didn't feel the same it felt... Dead, all over the cave floors, walls, and the ceiling was vines made out of the same material that Casey had just removed from his body and it looked like they where all coming from the hole, or they where trying to go into the hole, small spores flew through the air Casey hoped they wouldn't poison him.

He turned around and saw an elevator at the back of the cave that he hoped was still working, he walked towards it and saw that the fleshy vines also trailed through the cave towards the elevator, and up the shaft. He stepped into the large industrial grade elevator and pressed a button on it's control panel, the elevator sprung to life, the doors closed, two red lights in the back of it turned on, and the elevator groaned as it raised upwards. He heard the metal of the shaft and the

metal of the elevator screech together as it rose. Eventually the elevator reached the top of the shaft and the back doors opened up allowing Casey to step out of it, he walked through a long tunnel that eventually lead to an opening that also led out to an old abandoned mine quarry that the town was once famous for, if this still was Possum Springs. He walked through the quarry heading for a path that would lead him towards the woods, everything was exactly like how Casey had seen it when he was about ten, Mae, and Casey had snuck into the quarry so that they could grab an authentic mining helmet for Bea's Harfest costume.

He slowed down from a painful trudge to a depressed shamble, the thought of his friends made him feel hollow like he'd never see them again even though he didn't know what was going on. He shook his head and continued this time jogging, his mind returned to the thought he had before. Bea didn't want the helmet she was going to try and make her own but she was struggling so Mae Casey to help her get the helmet so she could give it to Bea, he never really met Bea the few times he saw her was on Mae's birthday parties, but after she turned twelve he never saw her again Mae said they had a big fight, and he never took the time to find Bea and try to fix her and Mae's relationship. Eventually he reached the top of the path, he turned around and took another look at the quarry below him. There was random metal, rocks, and lumber just sitting all over the place with no real purpose now, either they were stacked together or just strewn about randomly. He turned around and walked towards the woods just like inside of the cave that strange material was everywhere, the most disturbing thing was that the trees were literally covered in the stuff, from top to bottom. After what felt like forever Casey eventually reached the spot he was abducted and somehow the things he must've dropped when he passed out was still there except his flash light and meth piper were broken.

Luckily for him the lighter was still good. He tried several times to turn it on and on his tenth time the lighter flashed to life, once the lighter turned on was when Casey realized just how dark it was. He continued walking through the forest towards the town as he did he heard something rustle the bushes behind him, he quickly spun around and looked directly at where he heard the rustling and nothing was there. He turned back around and picked up his pace



jogging faster now almost sprinting, he eventually reached the Food Donkey's fence which had a massive hole in it with the strange vines tangled in it as well, he walked through the hole and took a look around the empty parking lot, the store's windows and doors were completely smashed in with the same vines running into the store he didn't want to take a closer look, as he jogged away from the Food Donkey he took a glance behind him and saw that the sign had been broken and had fallen onto the ground.

He eventually reached the edge of town and saw the Click-Clack Diner had been flipped on it's side with the door facing skyward, he remembered the time Gregg, and Mae had broken into the diner to try and get Mae's favorite toy when she was younger that she had left there a day ago, they where able to avoid breaking any locks or doors by going through a window that had been left open for some reason, once they got in the diner Gregg accidentally leaned against the window causing it to close and somehow lock it's self lucky for them Casey had gone out to get his mother's birthday present and just so happened to see Gregg panicking as he tried to get the window open again, and all Casey had to do was open the front door that was left unlocked for some reason.

Only just now did he realize just how many coincidences it took to get Mae and Gregg into that situation, not only that but they also got away with it which all was confused Casey seeing as how everyone left finger prints almost everywhere. But now the diner was on it's side, windows smashed, door wide open, and covered in those vines. It was like the vines were trying to destroy Casey's favorite memories, like when he found an actually nugget of gold in the woods, when Casey was able to convince the diner's manager to let Mae have her tenth birthday party there and to let them sleep over in the diner it's self. Sighing Casey walked away from the diner towards the town not wanting to see what if any kind of horrors this strange, twisted, demented, upside down version of Possum Springs had to offer.

## **2. A Monster from inside the wall**

Casey walked past the flipped over Click-Clack Diner trying his best to not look at it as if it was some sort of monster. After a little bit of walking he reached the abandoned lot that once used to be Big Al's Hair Salon the lot was to the right of the flipped Click-Clack, the salon was once popular but it started to lose business a year after Casey was born and it was eventually shut down a few months latter. The lot, like most of the buildings in Possum Springs, was covered in the strange vines with the only major difference being that the front fence had been ripped off and was now laying flat on the ground in front of where it used to stand. Casey, and Mae would play in the lot when they were younger, then when they became friends with Gregg the lot changed from a place to play around at to a place where they would just hang out. But now it was in no condition to have anyone do anything there, Casey turned his head and looked behind himself, he felt like something was watching him ever since he left the quarry but there was nothing behind him except for the also abandoned Food Donkey.

Casey sighed and continued walking forwards he passed by several other buildings he didn't want to look at in the hopes that he wouldn't get depressed by the state of the town, that was until he reached the center of Towne Centre the weirdest name for any place since... ever. Casey took a look around the area, it looked mostly the same, the various buildings in the area were intact and of course covered in the vines, but the monument to the soldiers that fought in the Worker's Revolution had been destroyed, all that was left was a little stump where a slightly larger memorial once stood, but for some reason the vines avoided the monument. Casey walked over to the monument and picked up a little chunk of it, it was a small piece of the memorial and only had a few names on it such as "Albert Covey. Philip Santello. Anselm Borowski." Anselm was Mae's ancestor, despite the fact that she had family participate in the war she never cared for that period of time in the town's history, as Casey read the chunk of history he remembered that Bea's last name was also Santello "How many people in this town had family fight in that war?"

Casey then put the object down before standing up and walking down the street heading towards Maple Street which is where Mae and her family lived. From behind him he heard something fall over, he quickly spun around and stared at the source of the sound but nothing was there except for a tin can that had fall over due to a gust of wind that both felt welcoming yet unnatural. Casey turned back around and continued walking forwards without any real plan, without any real destination, without any real motive. He eventually reached the large hill that separated the eastern part of the street from the western side of town, he walked down the hill which was much harder due to the unusual amount of vines that covered the hill, street, and houses. After a little while of walking he reached the front lawn of the Borowski household, if he were to cross the street and continue walking for a little bit he would reach his house, but he still walked to the front door of the house which was covered in vines including the door nob, he tried to rip the vines off of the door but it didn't work. He tried to kick the door in but that only made his foot hurt.

He took a look around the area and saw that the Borowski's mail box hand fallen over, he walked over to it and picked it up, he held it up like a battering ram and aimed it at the door "So. What's the possible outcomes of this? I bust the door open and I can walk inside, I manage to mess the vines up enough to let me rip em off, or I break the mail box and hurt myself during the process... Welp. Here goes nothing."

Casey then charged at the door running at full speed, he hit the door with the mail box and it busted the door open which caused Casey to fall over landing in the foyer of the house face first "Ow"

He stood back up and took a look around the house, the walls were covered in the vines which didn't come as a surprise, everything looked like it hadn't been cleaned in... well... ever, and except for those two things everything was exactly like how he last saw it a day before Mae left for college. Casey walked into the living room of the house and saw that the TV's screen had been broken and the vines were getting inside of the box, the couch was dirty, covered in vines, but still intact, he then walked into the kitchen which only look dirty, and like the rest of this upside down world was covered in vines.

Casey made his way up the stairs, all of the paintings on the second floor had been taken down and were nowhere to be seen, but only the walls were covered in vines this time, the bird and the bird cage that the family owned was now missing though. He continued walking up to Mae's room, which was inside of the attic, it took a while but he eventually was able to open the door that led to Mae's room, once he stepped inside his nose was attacked by the smell of death, decay, body odor, and somehow pears, he walked farther into Mae's room covering his nose with his right arm as he did.

Yet again everything was in the correct places, but the entirety of the room, from floor to ceiling and everything in between, was covered in vines. Casey walked over to Mae's bed and used his left arm to search under her bed for, really anything that would give him something to work with, he needed something anything to just, give him something... he didn't really know what he was looking for but he was going to find it, he eventually pulled a cardboard box out from under her bed, he pulled its lid off and took a look inside. In the box was several different things from Mae's past life, pictures she had drawn in preschool, her favorite toys from around the same time, and a picture that was torn in half, he took in a deep breath and held it, he moved his right arm and used both his hands to pick up the two pieces of the photo and placed them on top of the box's lid.

He then quickly put his right arm over his nose again so he could breathe, the left half of the photo showed Mae in her high school prom dress, a bright hopeful smile on her face, and the right side showed a person Casey had only met twice but knew very well due to the amount of times Mae talked about him Cole a Raccoon that she had a crush on since the start of high school and ended during prom when she... well she never told Casey what happened that night except for the fact that she never wanted to see Cole again, he wore a simple black tuxedo with a white undershirt and a red bow tie, he too was smiling, except his smile was cool, calm, and collected, while also being hopeful.

Even though he only met Cole twice they were very short periods of time where the two of them interacted with each other, and he hated his smile, something about it seemed off to him, or that could've been his sympathy for Mae poking through making him slightly bias

against Cole. He went back into the box and continued to search through it, he eventually pulled out a knife Gregg gave Mae on her seventeenth birthday, he still didn't know how Mae's parents let her keep it. He put the knife down on the box's lid and continued his search, after a little bit of scrounging around he eventually pulled out a walkie talkie that Mae had gotten two months before she left for college, he placed the walkie talkie down on the lid and started to mess with it. Suddenly from downstairs Casey heard a loud thud from either the front door slamming shut, or something hitting the ground. He stood up and crept over to Mae's bedroom door, he poked his head out of the door and stared at the second floor.

But everything was the same on that level "Eff that."

He walked back into Mae's room and searched around it, he eventually found a baseball bat leaning against Mae's left wall. He picked up the bat with his left arm and walked down to the second floor, once on the second floor and removed his right arm from his nose and held the bat in both his hands and walked down stairs, once he reached the first floor he took a look around, the front door had indeed slammed shut... somehow, he reached his left hand to open the door but before his hand reached the door knob he heard another much louder thud come from Mae's room, he ran up the stairs and entered Mae's room, come to find out the thud came from Mae's mirror, which had fallen over and shattered. The room still smelled horrible but his flight or fight reflexes allowed him to ignore it, he walked over to the mirror to examine it, he reached down to try and pick it back up but before he grabbed it the walkie talkie started to make strange noises, he shot back up in shock and stared at the walkie talkie, it only made strange static noises.

After a little bit of white noise the walkie talkie started to make strange breathing like noises that sounded extremely garbled, he picked the device up and shook it around not really sure what to do with it, from the other two floors of the house the lights began to flicker, Casey could hear some electrical popping noises which probably came from the broken TV. The radio's garbled breathing began to grow louder and more distorted, Casey dropped the device "Yeah no. Eff this."

He ran downstairs still holding the bat, and down to the second floor

as the lights started to flicker more violently, a part of the right wall started to elongate unnaturally as if it was someone pressing their hand against plastic wrap, and a shape began to form on the elongated wall, it looked like a long hand with only four fingers on it, suddenly the hand burst through the wall like it was actually plastic wrap and the lights burst. Casey ran downstairs and tried to open the front door with his free hand but it wasn't budging, he heard the sound of something hitting the ground upstairs, he continued to frantically try and open the door, from the second floor Casey could hear loud foot steps heading towards the stairs, Casey slammed his fist against the door and ran over to the living room, the TV was smoking and the vines that were inside of it were burnt.

He looked around the room trying to find someplace to hide, but there wasn't anywhere to hide so he just ran over to the couch and stood on it and pressed his back against the wall the couch's backside rested against. The foot steps grew closer as the strange creature reached the first floor, Casey could hear that the foot steps went over to the kitchen followed by the sounds of whatever that thing was messing with the cupboards, the foot steps then moved over to the other side of the wall Casey was leaning against, it started to mess with something over there, it eventually made something that sounded like it was made out of glass to fall over and shatter. The foot steps started to come closer and closer to Casey as it walked over to the left entrance of the living room, Casey silently got off of the couch and hid next to it on it's right side. The creature walked over to the smoking TV and... sniffed it? Casey couldn't get a good look at it right now, but from what he could see was that whatever it was it didn't have a face, it then started to walk over to the couch which made Casey grip the bat tighter, the creature inspected the couch and the area where Casey once stood, the creature then placed both of it's hands on the right armrest and slowly began to peek it's head over the side, Casey jumped up and hit the creature in the head with the bat, once it hit the the creature it broke in half.

The creature opened it's mouth which covered the area where a face would be, and it opened up like a flower peddle revealing that inside of the mouth was nothing but teeth. It made strange high pitched clicking sounds before screeching at Casey, it stood on two legs much like Casey except it was long and lanky, and very slender. Casey ran

out into the foyer and the monster chanced him, he quickly jumped out of the way of the monster and it hit the door but it still didn't budge, Casey ran upstairs and into Mae's room still holding the broken bat, he quickly shut the door and locked it before looking around the room for a way out, he could hear the monster walking up the stairs towards the door, he eventually remembered that Mae had a window that faced a large tree, he ran over to it and started to hit it with the broken bat, the monster pushed on the door but it didn't move. Casey continued to hit the window as the lock to the door started to unlock it's self. And that only made Casey hit the window harder, but the bat wasn't doing much, he took another look around the room and saw Mae's computer.

He ran over to it and picked it up he then ran back over to the window and threw the computer at it. The window shattered as the door finally unlocked itself and swung open letting the monster in. Casey picked up the broken bat and threw it at the monster before he jumped out of the window, the bat hit the monster but it didn't seem to care, Casey's jump sent him straight towards the tree and he was able to grab a vine that was hanging off of it, he swung on the vine towards the street, it snapped and made him hit the hard asphalt. The monster screeched at Casey again from the broken window but it didn't make an attempt to jump out of the window after him, instead it started to walk back downstairs. Casey got up and ran towards his house, his dad owned a few different kinds of hunting rifles and Casey knew how to use some of them which was obviously a good thing. He reached his front door and took a look around the block only to see that the monster was nowhere to be seen, he tried to open the front door but just like the Borowski's front door it wouldn't budge. He ran over to the side of the house and opened up a trash can, he then pulled a brick out of it that Casey had bought from Steve one time when he was high.

He ran over to the front of the house and tossed the brick at their window, the window shattered upon impact and Casey climbed through it. He entered his living room through the broken window, his house looked like the Borowski's except the walls, in his version of Possum Springs they were a egg shell white in color and the floors were a nice dark oak, but here the walls in that word were dirty to the point they almost looked grey, the floors were also so dirty to the

point they almost looked black, and just like everything else in this weird world was covered in vines. He ran into the hallway that would lead to the kitchen, the living room, the dining room, and the stairs that led up to his families bedrooms. But this hall also led to their basement, he ran over to the basement door and shoved it open, he ran downstairs and pulled out his lighter and turned it on so that he could see. The basement was about the same size as the Borowski's living room, it's walls and floor were concrete and covered in vines, there were random cardboard boxes placed everywhere filled with who knows what, but the thing he was looking for was a metal gun cabinet, inside of said cabinet were various different kinds of hunting rifles only two of which Casey knew how to use, a few hand guns Casey did know how to use, and one shotgun Casey had never learned how to use aside from loading it and cocking it but he knew what it was capable of so he needed it now.

Casey opened the cabinet and picked up the shot gun and a pistol, he grabbed a small tin box and opened it, inside of the tin were shot gun shells. Casey loaded the shot gun, and once it was fully loaded he grabbed another tin box and inside of that were magazines for the pistol, he grabbed three of them, stuffed two in his pockets, and loaded the third one into the pistol. He stood in the middle of the basement and aimed the shot gun at the stairs waiting for the monster to come down them, he had already cocked the shot gun so that wouldn't be a problem, the pistol had also been cocked and was ready in case he, for some reason, wouldn't be able to use the shot gun. He stood there waiting, adrenaline running, for a few minutes with no sounds from upstairs, no motion on the stairs, nothing, and his hands were starting to become sweaty and cramped, his arms were tired from holding the shot gun up for so long as well. But that's when the basement's singular ceiling light that was directly over Casey's head began to flicker. He hadn't heard any sounds from upstairs, so he took a quick look around his surroundings and saw that the monster wasn't in there. Just as he looked back at the stairs the area of the basement's ceiling began to elongate like how the wall back at the Borowski's did, he quickly backed away from that part of the room and aimed the gun at were the monster should land when it burst through the ceiling.

Just like last time the shape of it's hand appeared and it was the first



part of it's body to come out of the ceiling, then the monster fell out of the ceiling like it was a turd and it hit the floor. As it burst out of the ceiling it took out the light and made it hit the ground along side the monster, it looked at the stairs then over to Casey as it stood up. Casey hadn't realized before but the monster was much taller then he was, in fact it was so tall that it almost touched the ceiling with the top of it's head, the creature opened it's mouth and it made a flower like shape, it then screeched at Casey and quickly swatted the shot gun out of Casey's hands before he could pull the trigger, the gun skid across the floor and stopped a few inches away from Casey, he quickly pulled the pistol out from his right pocket and aimed it at the monster and fired six shots at it. He wasn't sure if any of them hit it but the sudden sound of the pistol's bullets being fired scared the monster, and that allowed Casey to ran over to the shot gun and pick it up, but by the time he had the monster was able to recover and it quickly grabbed Casey's shoulder. He spun around, holding the shot gun in his right hand, and without thinking it through he pulled the trigger and shot the monster directly in the chest. The force of the shot gun's recoil, and the fact that Casey had fired it one handed, caused him to fall backwards dropping the gun and hit his head on the concrete floor.

The monster screeched in pain and shock before it ran upstairs and it must've disappeared because Casey couldn't hear it run out of the house. He laid there on the floor looking up at the ceiling head throbbing, two guns laid next to him. He was tired, absolutely exhausted from all of the running and fear, he wasn't sure if he had a concussion or was just in pain, he started to doze off slowly, the room started to become blurry as he closed his eyes "At least I can say... That I died... Fighting a monster."

Casey then closed his eyes and passed out, head still throbbing and his right shoulder may have been dislocated or at the very least severely bruised, but none of that mattered at the moment, now it was time for some well deserved rest, and hopefully some good dreams. One of his last thoughts before FULLY going to sleep was "Am I going to really die?... If not, what an effed up place to take a nap."

### 3. A Story from long ago

Casey heard a familiar beeping sound, his eyes were closed and he really didn't want to open them, he rolled over to the side where the beeping was closest and his hand probed around trying to find it, he eventually felt the side of a small plastic box he then moved up to it's top side and pressed a button that was up there, the beeping stopped. He rolled back onto his back side and kept his eyes closed, he laid there for a little while before he heard a knocking sound, he groaned and slowly opened his eyes.

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March, 10th. 8:12 A.M. 2014. Michigan, Possum Springs, The Hartley Residence, Casey's Bedroom.

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Sun light hit his sleepy eyes as he opened them, he raised his right hand to cover his eyes. The walls of his bedroom were a brown oak-y color, and white shag carpet covered his floor. He was laying on top of a twin sized bed, the sheets of the bed and the pillow case were white in color much brighter then the carpet which was now grey-ish due to not being cleaned in a few years, there were two blankets on his bed one thin one and one thick one, the thin one was blue, and the thick one was black and had a skull decal in the middle of it. Casey heard some more knocking at his bedroom door "Casey? Are you up?"

Casey coughed, his head had started to throb when he opened his eyes "Y- Yeah I'm up mom."

"Can I come in?"

He grunted as he sat up in his bed, he wore a simple white tee shirt and black boxers with skull decals all over them "Yeah you can come in."

Casey's mom opened the door and walked over to his bed, she sat down at the edge of it, she had the same fur color as Casey, gold-ish orange, here eyes were hazel in color, and she was wearing her work clothes for her job at the Food Donkey as a cash register operator

"So... Your father and I have to head off to work now, we'll be back by nine P.M. with some food and we've called for someone that want's to keep their identity a surprise for now to come and look after you till we get back... I'm so sorry that we couldn't take time off to help you but, with how suddenly this all happened we didn't have enough time to request time off."

Casey sighed "Mom really, you don't have to apologize. I understand."

His mom nodded and smiled "There's some pain medicine in the bathroom if you need it, and remember."

His mom picked up an empty, white, plastic trash can and showed it to Casey "If you're going to puke do it in here."

Casey grinned "Mom I don't think concussions make people through up."

His mom put the trash can down next to Casey's bed and stood up "Just in case.. Alright I'll see you at nine."

Casey waved his right hand slightly "Bye mom."

His mom then walked out of Casey's room, he could hear the sound of his father asking her if she was ready before they both headed downstairs. A minute or two had passed since Casey's parents had left for work, Casey had laid back down and closed his eyes hoping to get some sleep before the "babysitter" showed up, when he heard tapping at his window. Casey opened his eyes and sat up, he stared at the window but couldn't see what was causing it due to his blinds being down at just the right angle that it prevented him from seeing outside, he pulled the bed's covers off of him and sat at the side of the bed, he slipped on a pair of black and white slippers, they were black on the outside and white on the inside, he walked over to his window and pulled up the blinds, he was shocked by what he saw, he saw that Steve Scriggins was hanging from his window with a cocky smile on his face "You gonna let me in or just stare at me like a weirdo?"

Casey pulled his window open and Steve climbed into his bedroom "Do you know how hard it was to get the ladder from the glass

factory to here? Without drawing attention to myself."

Casey sat down on his bed facing Steve "I doubt that."

Steve chuckled and sat down on a brown stool that stood in front of Casey's window, Steve was wearing his greenish brown jacket and dark blue jeans with brown work boots that he almost always wore "So. What happened?"

Casey sighed as he slipped his slippers off "I was skating around town and must've hit a rock or something and I hit the ground, it was kinda bloody but somehow it only gave me a minor concussion."

Steve rolled his eyes "Don't tell me old Dr Hank gave you that prescription?"

Casey grinned "Nah... Mom and dad drove me all the way to... Philip Town I think. And had me put in a inside of a real ER."

Steve smiled "Niiiiicccccce. You're lucky, when I broke my arm a few years back my parents just had me sent to my grandma who was a nurse ONCE in her life, but as you can see it's better I guess. Would've healed faster if I was sent to a ER."

Casey sighed "I guess you're right... Wait... Are you the person that my parents hired to take care of me till they get back?"

Steve stretched his back before answering "Nah... I just wanted to stop by. Had no clue that they hired somebody to..."

Casey knew what he was about to do "Don't you d-"

"Baaaabysit you!"

Casey groaned and covered his face with his hands "Hweh heh heh. Priceless."

Casey groaned some more as he removed his hands from his face "No it has a price and it's effing one cent it's that bad."

Steve laughed some more because of what was just said to him. From downstairs the two could hear the front door open "Welp I'm gonna

head out. See you latter."

Casey waved to Steve as he climbed back out of the window and down his latter, Casey then walked over to the window and closed it before walking over to his bed and sitting back down on it, he could hear the sound of... two people? walking up the stairs and standing in front of his door. They whispered to each other giggling slightly as they did, Casey couldn't make out who the voices belonged too, but suddenly the door flew open and Gregg along with Mae burst into Casey's room and both yelled in unison "Surprise!"

Gregg was wearing the white and blue jacket he "stole" from one of his bullies, blue jeans, and red shoes, he also had a board game tucked under his right arm. Mae wore her usual clothes but she held a card game in her left hand, Casey jumped up in shock and quickly slid his leg's under his covers so he could hide his underwear from Gregg and Mae "Holy!... Guys, you want to give me a heart attack? I already have a concussion!"

Gregg laughed and Mae giggled "Sorry dude! We just wanted to surprise you."

Mae nodded "Yeah! I'm gonna be taking care of ya' till your parents get back! And Gregg here is my plus one!"

She raised her arms up into the air as she spoke to him. Casey smiled "So, maybe today won't be boring after all."

Gregg grinned brightly "Yeah! While Mae and Gregg are here, boredom can go suck it's ass!"

Mae also grinned "Yeah!"

Then the two did their thing in unison  
"AWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Casey chuckled as they howled to the roof "Guy's you're gonna make me go def!"

Gregg giggled "Sorry."

Casey motioned for Gregg and Mae to sit on his bed with him "So

what do you two have?"

Gregg placed the board game down on Casey's bed, the board game in question was the trio of friend's coveted table top role playing board game "Demon Tower: The Dark Crusaders" Casey stared at the board game in disbelief "Dude! How'd you get this?!"

Gregg smiled some more "I was able to buy it at the Food Donk with a coupon that I got for my last birthday yesterday."

Casey grinned as he felt the black cardboard box "Niiiiicccccccceeee. And Mae, what did you bring?"

Mae frowned slightly "It uh. It kinda sucks in comparison but I got Uno."

Casey scooted forwards and rubbed Mae's shoulder "It's doesn't suck in comparison, it's just a different kind of fun... But, no offense, can we play Demon Tower first?"

Mae chuckled as she put Uno inside of one of her pant pockets "Yeah it's fine, I was gonna ask that to begin with so no offense warning needed!"

Casey grinned "Alright."

Gregg frowned as he took a look around the room "You got a table around here? The bed's not gonna be stable enough to play on."

Casey pointed towards the door "Yeah.. We got a folding table downstairs in the... Living room I think."

Mae hopped off of the bed "I'll go get it!"

Casey smiled "Alright."

Mae also smiled and made her way towards the door then downstairs. Mae searched for a minute or two before reentering Casey's bedroom holding the folded folding table "Who's ready to eff some demons up?"

Gregg raised his hand which made Casey smile. It took a little bit

before the friends were able to unfold the table and set up the game, Gregg handed Mae and Casey their character pieces, Mae was handed the main character of the series Pale Cat, and Casey was handed a character he hadn't ever seen before "Who's this?"

Gregg looked at the piece for a second before answering "Oh! That's a new character to this game! His name is the White Crusader! He was once a noble knight but he was eventually executed by his greedy king! Now he roams the Demon Tower as a white ghost in search of the Resurrective Stone! A new item to the game."

Casey smiled as he stared at the little playing piece "Nice. So I'm guessing that the main goal of the game this time around is to get our hands on the Resurrective Stone? Like how in Black Star we had to get the Blade of Eternal Light so we could vanquish the Dark King?"

Gregg handed Casey a small instruction manual "Actually! That is only one of the goals! This game has multiple goals with multiple possible endings! But yeah, it's the MAIN quest of the game."

Casey looked over to Gregg who was sitting on the brown stool holding the black book that the game master used "So almighty game master! Tell us how this epic tale starts."

Gregg smiled and cleared his throat so he could do his best narrator voice "The Black Star has set, the Dark King vanquished, but yet again the cursed black stoned tower has risen up, go forth crusaders and climb the steps of the Demon Tower!"

For the rest of their time there Casey, Gregg, and Mae would play together laughing. Eventually they reached the end of their campaign and now were confronting the creature in control of the Demon Tower in this game, Gregg picked up a playing piece from the box that sat underneath the table and kept it hidden from the others "You've finally done it. You've reached the top of the Demon Tower, you stand atop of the tower, cold wind howling through your ears, you hear strange sounds, screams of the dead. Black smoke begins to form in front of you taking the shape of a bipedal, two tailed, four armed, single headed dragon."

Gregg then slammed the piece down in front of Mae and Casey's

"You've encountered the controller of the Demon Tower... The Demogorgon! So, what are ya' gonna do?"

Casey and Mae lend towards one another and started to whisper "So... I have no effing clue what to do."

Mae frowned "Me nether... Maybe I should use a high damage attack that doesn't have much risk of backfiring just to see what the Demogorgon can do."

Casey sighed "Okay, but if it does back fire I'll use Healers Sight so that I can heal you and see what other moves he's got, if it doesn't backfire then I'll use Holy Blade on it."

Mae nodded "Alright Gregg I use... Pale Strike!"

Gregg smiled "Remember you gotta roll a perfect 10, if you go over you're gonna miss-"

Mae rolled her eyes "I'm gonna miss and cut myself, I remember. It's not like you've said this every time I've used this move."

Gregg shrugged "Just trying to make sure you don't forget."

Gregg handed Mae the multi-sided dice and waited eagerly for her to roll. Suddenly the sound of Casey parents coming home was heard by the friends up stairs, Gregg looked outside then at a clock that hung on the back of Casey's door "Man... I gotta get home."

It was night time outside and Casey knew that Gregg's parents still kept him under a curfew due to his crimes, Mae also frowned "Dang... I've gotta get home too, aunt mall cop is having her birthday party tomorrow and mom and dad want me up early so I can get a present for her before school."

Casey also frowned "Man... Can we continue this when I feel better?"

Gregg nodded as he opened the black book again and flipped over to some blank pages "Sure can! Just let me write down what happened and we can pick right back up where we left off!"

Casey nodded "Sweat... Welp I'll see you guys latter."



Mae stood up as Gregg started to put the game away "See ya', you need any help Gregg?"

Gregg shook his head "Nah, I got it. Thanks for the offer though, see ya' tomorrow!"

Mae smiled "That's if I don't pass out on the way to school from lack of my usual amount of sleep."

Casey grinned "By usual amount of sleep you mean sleep till you're almost late and book it to school."

Mae smiled "It's worked out so far!"

Casey chuckled "You got me there."

Mae left the room first followed by Gregg who held Demon Tower in his hands. Casey still felt like experiencing some more of Demon Tower so he grabbed something from his night stand, it was a book adaptation of Demon Tower named "Demon Tower: The Dark Sky" Casey had read it hundreds of times but he loved it so much that he couldn't ever stop, he opened the book and read it's opening monologue "Long ago, in the age of knights and kings, there lives a warrior stripped of they're honor, and exiled from their home, and given the name "Pale Cat" but not all hope is lost for this dishonored warrior, for there speaks of a legend that a black tower stands alone in a sea of dead grasslands, and who ever can enter said tower and come out alive will be respected throughout the lands, so go now, young cat and climb the steps, of the Demon Tower! And tear down it's ever growing Dark Sky!"

## 4. The Dark Sky

Casey groaned as he sat up and opened his eyes, his head was still throbbing from he hit it against the concrete floor of the basement. He looked around the room, everything was the same as he last saw it, boxes everywhere and the walls were covered in those weird vines, except now the smell of gun powder lingered in the air from when he attacked that monster. The shot gun that made him hit his head laid on it's side next to Casey on his right side, and the pistol was on his left, Casey tried to stand up but almost fell over from a sudden jolt of pain in his head, it defiantly wasn't the same kind of pain as when he got a concussion at age eighteen, a year before Mae left for colleague but it still hurt a lot. Casey took in some deep breaths and straightened himself standing up right now, he patted down his clothes getting the dust, dirt, that weird flesh/fungus like material that had accumulated on top of him when he was passed out off of him.

He then squatted down and picked up the pistol in his left hand, then the shot gun with his right. He wasn't sure if he'd keep using the shot gun or trade it out for a rifle he knew how to use, because he doubted that he had seen the last of that monster, Casey walked over to the metal gun cabinet which he had left wide open and grabbed a brown belt with a pistol holster on it, he stared at the rifles and decided that he had enough of that shot gun, he put the long black weapon back inside of the cabinet and grabbed a hunting rifle. As he grabbed the hunting rifle something caught his eyes, sitting next to the rifle Casey's hand was reaching for was his father's war rifle, an M16 rifle to be clear. Casey never used his father's rifle, and after the Vietnam War ended his father never used it again either. His father would take it out and clean it, make sure it works, but he wouldn't ever fire it, Casey all ways wanted to use it, ever since he was old enough to fire guns. He stared at the rifle his hand was hovering next to and the M16, he picked up the M16 and inspected it, it felt lighter then he thought it would.

He slung the M16 over his back and holstered the pistol on his hip, he tried to sling the M16 over his back in a cool way but instead the gun hit his back and made him lose his breath which also made his

head throb more, he coughed slightly as he caught his breath and readjusted the M16 "I'm never going to do that again."

He grabbed a M16 magazine and loaded it into the gun which was still strapped over his shoulder, he took a moment to think about his... supplies?... yeah supplies, he had a simple pistol, a M16, three pistol magazines, one of which had already fired six shots, and only one M16 magazine. His pockets wouldn't fit more magazines and his head was still throbbing, first he remembered that his parents kept headache medicine in the bathroom which was on the second floor, and then he remembered that his dad had a duffel bag in his parent's bedroom. Casey crept up the stair leading to the first floor, he poked his head out of the basement door and looked around the hallway checking to see if the monster was still there, luckily it wasn't. He walked over to the stairs which was covered in vines to the point that he had to practically jump from spot to spot to avoid stepping on them, Casey didn't know what they were and what they were made out of but he didn't ever want to touch them, after making his way up the stairs Casey had to decide, either go to the bathroom and get the headache meds, or head to his parent's room and get the duffel bag.

A sudden jolt of head pain made his decision for him, he walked over to the bathroom and found that, the door had been destroyed, wood chips were scattered across the floor of the bathroom. Casey walked into the bathroom and much like when he first entered Mae's room his nose was assaulted by the smell of rot, decay, death, and worst of all sewage, the smell of sewage seemed to be coming from the bath tub/shower, and the toilet. Casey covered his nose with his right arm and walked over to the sink, he pulled open the medical cabinet, inside of it was all sorts of oral hygiene tools, tooth brushes, tooth paste, half empty mouth wash, floss, tooth picks for some reason, and three hair brushes one for each of his family, all of them were covered in dust, what seemed to be cobwebs, and a small amount of that weird flesh/fungus stuff that the vines were made out of. And on the bottom shelf was the headache meds, Casey picked up the meds with his left hand and dusted it off with his hoodie, once he had dusted it off completely he held it up to his eyes and took a look at it's expiration date "June 3rd, 2017" Casey sighed "Thank god."

He put the bottle down on the small wooden stand next to the sink

and took in deep breath before removing his right arm from his nose, he quickly unscrewed the cap of the medicine bottle and picked up two pills, he then quickly put his arm back over his nose and resumed breathing. Casey held the pills in his hands and took a moment to think, should he try and get some kind of liquid that wouldn't make him puke so that he could swallow them easier, or should he just pop em' in his mouth without any water. Casey sighed and walked out of the bathroom still holding the pills, he walked downstairs and headed towards the kitchen. It was extremely unsettling to see a dirty and neglected version of his kitchen, his mother made sure that it was all ways clean despite the fact she worked most of the week, he walked over to one of the used to be brown cabinets and opened it up, inside of the cabinet were cups, bowls, and plates Casey picked up a see through plastic cup and walked over to the kitchen sink, he hoped with all of his might that by some sort of miracle the water was still working and was completely purified... well as purified as tap water could be.

He turned the faucet on and for a little bit nothing happened, he heard the sound of the water trying to get out of the faucet but nothing was happening, when suddenly water poured out of it scaring Casey slightly. It looked normal, it had that white color that rushing water had, it smelled like regular old Possum Springs tap water, the only thing left to do was... taste it, Casey's stomach could tank loads of things, week old pudding, that gross beer Steve made once, some of Mae's worse puns, that one time Gregg was cheated on by some slim ball he had forgotten the name of, actual piss (really, REALLY long story) but he wasn't sure his stomach could take shit, mixed with piss, and what ever else was inside of the pipes. He took a couple of deep breaths and placed the cup under the faucet, once it was filled Casey turned off the sink and held the cup up to his eyes, it looked clear, nothing seemed to be floating in it so that was good, yet again the only thing left to do was to taste it Casey held it in front of his mouth breathing a little fast in fear "H- Hear we go... Bottoms up I guess."

He took a drink from the cup... and it tasted... alright, nothing really new, it tasted like tap water. But the fact that it didn't taste like shit, and that he hand't had anything to drink in awhile, maybe even a few hours, it tasted like honey. He chugged the rest of the water and

quickly refilled it again, rinse and repeat a few times before Casey's surprise thirst subsided, Casey filled the cup one last time and popped the two pills into his mouth before he took another drink of water, the water and the pills rolled down his throat with ease. Casey headed back upstairs this time to get his father's duffel bag, he opened the door to his parent's room and walked in, their room was normal in size, a king sized bed sat in the middle of the room its head board resting against the back wall, two night stands were on either side of the bed both of them had lamps on them, the one on his mother's side had a book on it, while the one on his father's side had also had a book, his mother's book was about a group of friends that solve a supernatural mystery while also dealing with both friendship based problems and familial problems, and his father's book was about a group of people forced together by a common enemy and they have to work together to stop said enemy while also dealing with... taboo subjects? yeah, taboo subjects.

Casey had read his mother's book once, he only got half way through it before he stopped, not because he didn't like the story, far from it, he stopped reading it because it made him depressed, all he could ever think about while reading it was "Why can't me and MY friends have an adventure like this? Why can't Possum Springs be as interesting as Peter's Hallow?"

Peter's Hallow was the name of the town the book was set in, but now that he was going on an adventure was it really worth it? He shrugged the depressing thoughts off and walked over to his parent's closet, he opened the closet door and despite its name there wasn't any clothes inside of it, except for his mother's old brief case from when she was an accountant, and his father's brown duffel bag. Casey picked up the duffel bag a big smile all over his face, he ran down to the basement and started to fill it with ammo for the pistol and the M16, once he removed all of the ammo from the gun cabinet he closed it and then zipped the duffel bag up. Casey walked back upstairs and over to the front door, it was literally pitch black outside so it must've been nighttime, for some reason it almost seemed as if the inside of the house glowed on its own, he jogged into the living room and over to a small table, he then opened up a drawer that was in the table, inside of the drawer was a flashlight that his family kept for emergencies. Casey turned the flashlight on and it looked like it

didn't need it's batteries changed so he turned it off and walked back over to the front door, his hand rested on the door nob as he stared at the inky blackness that was nighttime in this weird world, he sighed and opened the door.

Casey stared into the darkness, the unnatural glow coming from inside of the house giving off some light that let him see slightly in front of him, he turned on the flashlight and started to walk towards the town along the side walk. He walked back into Towne Centre, he just aimlessly walked around that area of town for a while before reaching the legendary Video Outpost "Too" why was it legendary? well a few years ago, one of the cashier workers came into work hungover and wasn't paying much attention when they sold a ten year old kid a "suggestive" adult movie, the store received massive flak for this and even a lawsuit, at the end of it all the store smoothed everything over and fired the person that sold the movie to the kid, but the story was quickly fading into obscurity the only people remembering it clearly being Casey, Steve, the kid that bought the movie who was now from what Casey had heard a Valid Victorian in school, and one of Casey's ex girlfriends Stacy Newman a light brown, turquoise eyed deer who had a nasty habit of end all of her sentences like a question. He walked into the store being as cautious as he could, nothing, that gut full of shot gun led must've scared the monster off good, he walked into the store and an almost calming sight was seen by him, there wasn't a vine in sight, the store just looked dusty, neglected, and rundown, he turned off the flashlight as he walked into the store.

He wasn't sure what his plan was, so he just walked around the store looking at the old movies, like the Death Chill trilogy and it's horrible fourth installment, and the almost comedic Swamp Husband, then there was the infamous VHS area of the store were the "suggestive" movie had come from, it was even complete with a small curtained off booth in the corner of the store, but the VHS area wasn't just for those kind of movies, there was also various documentaries, animated movies, and a few seasons of a used to be popular TV sitcom show. He heard the wind begin to howl as it blew into the store, it blew dust and cobwebs off of the shelves, movies, and counters, it made the curtain of the booth flap, Casey thought he could hear faint, almost distant whispering in his ears as the wind

continued to howl, after a little while the wind started to circulate inside of the store like it was trying to create a movie tornado, a movie-nado. Casey was almost blow off of his feet by the wind which now seemed to be only inside of the store, he raised his hands up to shield his face from the cold, dry, and bitter wind. Suddenly the wind blew outside closing the door of the store as it left, for a second Casey could swear that he saw a pair of bright, white, glowing eyes in the darkness outside. He stood there in the store breathing heavily not quite sure what just happened, he took a look around the store, it looked clean. And just as he thought it looked clean the dust, and webs the wind had kicked up settled back down and caused Casey to both cough and sneeze, sometimes at the same time which burned like hell. He walked over to the front door of the store and looked outside, nothing was out there no monsters, no evil wind, nothing. He opened the door and walked outside turning his flashlight back on and took another quick look around that area of town, nothing still.

His head had stopped throbbing a little bit ago so the meds must've been working, Casey then yawned, he was tired and really exhausted from all of the stuff he did today, Casey walked over to Apartment Building 1063, he never stayed there before nor has he ever been inside of it but the building was the closest place with beds at the moment. He had to shove the door open due to it being covered in those vines, he was getting really sick of them, just like at Casey's house the inside of the building seemed to glow a pale blue, just barely bright enough to illuminate the interior but not bright enough to illuminate the outside, he took a look around the building's lobby the walls were blue with tan baseboards, over on the left side of the room was an elevator with an intercom next to it on it's right side, over on the right wall was a doorway leading to a stairwell. Casey doubted that the building had any power so he was going to have to take the stairs, but first he was going to have to grab a key so he could get into a room, he walked over to the front desk and vaulted over it, as he vaulted over the counter the duffel bag and the M16 smacked against the wooden counter making loads of noise, once he was standing on the other side of the counter he started to search for the keys which didn't take to long as there was a cardboard box tucked away inside of the counter, he pulled it out from under the counter and took a look inside, there was only one key to room, room 101. He slid the key into his pocket and stood up, as he stood up he

saw dust get kicked up by something in the middle of the room in front of him.

Casey stared at the spot where the dust had been kicked up as he walked over to the stairwell, he was only able to open the door halfway before he was stopped by some vines on the other side, he shoved the door several times but nothing happened except make his shoulder hurt, he was tired and now agitated by this door, he took another look around the lobby and saw that there was a fire ax behind the counter, he ran over to the ax's glass container and broke it open the the butt end of the M16, he picked the ax up which was heavier then he expected and he ran back over to the half open door, Casey lifted the ax up into the air and quickly brought it down cutting the vines with one fell swoop, he let go of the ax and let it hit the ground, he didn't care if he was going to need it at some point in the future, right now he was tired and desperately wanted some sleep that wasn't caused when he hit his head against concrete. Casey climbed the flight of stairs growing more and more tired as he did, eventually he reached room 101 the room he'd be sleeping in for tonight, maybe even for the foreseeable future. Casey slid the key into the lock and twisted it, luckily nothing happened the key didn't brake, and the lock didn't stop half way, he pushed the door open with ease when compared to the other doors he'd opened today, he stepped into the room's living room which only had a dusty brown resting against the middle part of the back wall, a little beige rug in the middle of the room, and a TV sitting against the wall in front of the couch.

He took a few steps into the living room and dropped all of his things, the duffel bag, and the M16 onto the floor, his sleepy and delirious mind decided that he should turn on some lights so he flicked on the light switch next to the door and by some magical one in a million chance the lights flickered to life, over to his right was a small bedroom, which only had a bed, a nightstand sitting next to it with a lamp on top of it, over to his left was a cozy looking kitchen but right now he didn't care about the kitchen, he walked over to the bed, undid the gun holster belt and let it fall to the floor, he then flopped down onto the bed which kicked up some dust and caused Casey to sneeze. A few minutes latter Casey was laying under the covers of the bed, he was only wearing his underwear and his socks,



his hoodie and pants were laying on the couch in the living room, he had turned off the lights after he undressed so the entire apartment room was pitch black, he stared up at the ceiling thinking about various different things that his sleepy mind wanted to.

Like: Why was I chosen to get tossed into that hole? What's with this world? What the eff was that monster? Man... I really want some blueberry pancakes right now. He yawned as he started to drift closer and closer to the land of dreams when his mind thought up some more things: I made so many promises that I didn't know I couldn't keep, like I promised Mae that I'd be there when she came home, I promised Gregg that I'd help him to finally find true love, I promised my parent's I'd finally find a job... I miss them, all... Will they miss me? Do they even know I'm gone? Will they find that cult? Why did his parents tell him to count sheep before he went to sleep when he was younger? Casey then closed his eyes and went to sleep. But directly above him were two white glowing dots hovering just a few inches away from his face, they glowed like white flames and they almost looked like eyes, but Casey was asleep so he couldn't see them and they had appeared when he went to sleep. And worse of all, the right wall of the bedroom started to elongate as the monster pushed through it, reaching for Casey with it's long, four fingered hands.

## 5. Terrorized in the Night

Casey yawned and opened his eyes, he could smell one of his favorite breakfast foods blueberry pancakes, he sat up and rubbed his right eye with his left hand. It'd been a week since Casey had recovered from his minor concussion so he could basically go around town and do whatever he wanted to, Casey got out of bed wearing his regular pajama attire, white tee shirt, black boxers with a skull pattern all over it. He walked over to one of his clothes drawers and opened it, he grabbed a pair of black, fuzzy, lunge pants and slid them on, he opened his door and stepped out into the hallway yawning slightly, he could hear that the shower was running so his father must've been getting ready for work, but something felt off, it felt like he had already lived this day before, like Deja Vu except something was going to change, or maybe he was still half asleep and his mind was hallucinating. He walked down the stairs and could hear the sound of the pancakes being baked in the kitchen and the sizzle of bacon as well, he walked into the kitchen and over to one of the cabinets he grabbed a cup and walked over to the fridge, as he did he heard "Morning honey."

Casey simply sleepily mumbled "Good morning."

As he grabbed a bottle of orange juice and pored it into his empty cup, but something wasn't right, that wasn't his mother's voice, that wasn't even his aunt's voice who lived a few towns away and would visit every so often, he couldn't figure out who's voice that was. Casey started to drink his orange juice as he tried to place the voice acting as normal as possible in the event his sleepy mind was messing with him, but he suddenly connected the voice to someone, once he did he choked on his juice in surprise, he slammed the cup down, turned around and stared at the person that shouldn't be in his house right now "Mae?!"

She turned around and looked at him, she was wearing her normal clothes but she also had a white apron on over them, she was also just as tall as Casey instead of being a few inches shorter than him, she was also holding a spatula "What's wrong?"

Mae's face was concerned but not like a friendly kind of concerned no

it was something else "What are you doing here? What's going on?"

Mae put the spatula down on the stove and walked over to Casey "Damn. That wasn't JUST a minor concussion was it?"

Mae reached her hand up and placed it on Casey's forehead felling it "No it was! But you're not supposed to be here! You don't live here!"

He removed Mae's hand from his forehead "Casey? Are you sure you're alright? Cuz I don't think one of the side effects of RECOVERING from a concussion includes surprise amnesia, that only makes you remember events from when you were eighteen and I was seventeen."

Casey stared at Mae blankly "What? J- Just tell me what's going on... Like what are you doing here. And who's in the shower upstairs?"

Mae stared at Casey in that strange not so friendly concerned look "Okay... Well I'm making you your favorite pancakes because you just reco-"

Casey put his hands on Mae's shoulders "What are you doing in my house! Period! Not right at this moment."

Mae's concerned look turned into a fearful one "I- I- I'm your wife Casey."

Casey's eyes widened in absolute shock "What. The. N- No, what- I- WHAT?!" that's when Casey also realized that Mae's concerned look was one of a loved one, a romantic loved one. Casey sat at the dinning room table trying to figure out what was going on "You're my w- wife, but who's upstairs?"

Mae sat across from him "Our son."

Casey hit his head against the table and screamed into it, he lifted his head up and stared at Mae again "I don't effing understand anything that's going on right now! I was eighteen when I went to sleep, living with my parents, you and Gregg were still going to high school, Steve would climb through my effing window every so often using his ladder, Jack lived with his weird anti-internet, anti-government dad! I wasn't married to you, and I defiantly didn't have a son!"

Mae looked hurt "Casey keep your voice down! Lucas could hear us!"

Casey rubbed his forehead groaning, he closed his eyes trying to wrap his mind around all of this when he heard foot steps coming from the stairs. Casey opened and looked over to the stairs, coming down them was probably Lucas, he wore a blue tee shirt with a yellow stair on it, white boxers, and currently no shoes, he was a black furred, green eyed cat "What's for breakfast?"

Mae stood up and walked over to Lucas and led him to the table in a sort of hugging/pulling grip that mother's could do "Blueberry pancakes."

Lucas smiled as he sat down next to Casey. Casey tried his best to avoid looking at Lucas, but Lucas didn't seem to notice it as he was staring at the kitchen excitedly waiting for Mae to come back with the pancakes, Lucas and Casey sat next to each other for a little while in silence when a loud crash came from the kitchen, Casey stood up staring at the kitchen "Mae? You okay?"

He walked over to the kitchen cautiously. He poked his head around the corner of the the kitchen door and saw something horrifying, Mae laying motionless on the kitchen floor in front of the stove, crouching over her was... the monster. It turned around and looked at Casey as Lucas walked over to the kitchen as well "Mom?!"

The monster stood up and screeched at the two cats, Casey reached for his hip to try and pull out his pistol but he was still in his pajamas, the monster opened it's mouth fully and charged at Casey and Lucas screeching. Casey woke up in a cold sweat panting heavily "It w- was just a dream."

Now that he knew it was indeed just a dream things made more sense, when Mae was about thirteen or fourteen she had a crush on Casey but eventually grew out of it, and when Casey was eight years old he created his own dream child which was a black furred, green eyed cat except he wanted to name his dream child "Conner" not Lucas. But something wasn't right, and Casey didn't know why it took him so long to realize exactly what was wrong, he was covered in those weird vines, the only part of his body not covered was his head, he looked around the building this cocoon? pod? yeah pod, was

inside of. It was the abandoned glass factory Steve spent most of his time in, the pod was situated in the middle of the building, it was also connected to the ceiling, the wall in front of Casey and the pod had a giant hole in it big enough for a semi-truck to fit through, but he heard something, clicking. The clicking came from behind the pod but Casey couldn't turn his head to see it so he assumed that it was the monster, he looked around the building trying to find someway out of the pod but he couldn't find anything within reach, hell he couldn't reach anything anyways.

Casey tried to pull his arms out of the pod but they wouldn't budge, he tried to push himself out of the pod but he wouldn't budge, he wasn't going to move anytime soon, he was going to die in a world where he was all alone, eaten alive by a hideous monster and in his sleep wear none the less. Casey sighed finally giving in to the fact he wasn't going to escape, his ears folded on his head in sadness as he gave in, he felt the wind blow over his body and the pod coming from the giant hole in the wall, it was cold, and oddly soothing, he then heard something hit the ground in front of him, Casey opened his eyes and looked at his feet, in between his feet which were only partially covered in vines was a lighter, Steve Scriggins' lighter to be exact. Casey looked around the building trying to find where the lighter fell from but at the moment he couldn't see it, he heard the monster getting closer to him and the pod, Casey took in a deep breath and searched his memories looking for the one thing that would save him right now, hacky sack a sport or hobby Casey had when he was younger, he quickly kicked his foot up wards hitting the lighter as he did, he then kicked his left foot up and launched the lighter at his face, out of instinct Casey grabbed the lighter with his mouth somehow. Casey used all of his strength to pull his left arm out of the pod, it took a while but he was eventually able to rip his arm out of the pod, he took the lighter out of his mouth and turned it on, he then pressed the flame against the pod and started to move up and down lightly, the monster was getting closer.

After a little bit the area the flame touched started to blacken and smoke emitted from it, Casey continued to do this for a little longer the monster now only a few inches away from him when he was able to catch the area of the pod it made contact with on fire. Casey fanned the flames by blowing into it lightly and it started to grow in

size engulfing more of the pod in flames, Casey started to try and push himself out of the pod and it was working! The fire was making the vines weak enough to let Casey to push himself out, he then suddenly burst out of the pod and landed on the floor, from the neck down he was covered in some sort of weird goo-y slime like substance, the smell of smoke started to grow along with the heat of the flames. Casey stood up and looked at the burning pod, since he burst out of it the fire had grown much bigger to the point it was almost touching the ceiling, then the monster reared the corner of the pod and stared at Casey, the light of the fire allowed Casey to see that it was pale white in color, with red vines visible under it's skin, the monster screeched at Casey opening it's mouth fully as it did, Casey turned around and ran through the large hole outside the monster following closely behind him, if Casey didn't find someway to fend the monster off soon he was going to die. Casey ran towards the parking lot of the abandoned glass factory trying to find something, anything that could help him but there was nothing, except for some small rocks which wouldn't do anything to the monster, and some leaves? or what was once leaves. But Casey then saw a white pick-up truck parked in front of the glass factory, he sprinted towards the truck which had it's left door wide open, the monster was following very closely behind him chasing after him like a bear running on four legs, Casey then jumped into the truck and slammed the left door shut, the monster slammed into the truck's door and screeched in pain.

Casey slid into the driver's seat, luckily for him the keys were still in the ignition, he turned the car keys and turned the truck on, the truck's flood lights started to flash rapidly and so did it's tail lights, even the interior lights flickered rapidly. The monster stood up and started to slam the left door's window trying to break in, Casey shifted the truck into revers and drove away from the monster, leaving it screeching in rage, Casey then noticed something he never noticed before, the front doors of the glass factory were large enough to fit the truck inside, and the doors weren't even there, they had been broken off allowing anything and everything to get in. Casey shifted the truck into drive as the monster charged at him head on, Casey sat there revving the truck's engine, he had only taken three driving classes since he turned sixteen so he didn't know a lot about how to drive what little he did know came from Steve and the

knowledge he had gotten from his cousin who was an illegal street racer who was also now in jail. Casey then quickly speed forwards heading straight for the monster who didn't have enough time to react so Casey rammed right into it, the truck carried the monster all the way into the building as Casey drove right towards a wall, the building was now almost completely on fire and smoke filled the entire building and leaked outside as well, Casey then slammed the truck into the wall with the monster still stuck on the truck's grill.

The truck slammed into the wall hard and the air bags deployed hitting Casey directly in the face, he quickly climbed out of the car which wasn't made easy by the air bag, he looked at the wall that the truck had crashed into and there was nothing there, no monster, no blood, no guts, nothing, the only thing that was there was a damaged truck. Then a burning piece of the building fell down next to Casey reminding him of the fact that he was currently standing inside of a burning building, Casey ran out side as he did he turned his head and looked at the truck, he saw that either when the monster slammed into the side of the truck, when the monster tired to brake into the truck, when Casey hit the monster with the truck, or when the truck hit the wall one of those caused the truck's gasoline to leak out of it, once he saw the leaking gasoline he sprinted out of the room and stopped several feet away from the burning building, he turned around just in time to see the truck's gasoline to catch fire and explode which caused the fire to grow bigger and the building to collapse. It was an almost beautiful sight, the yellow color of the fire and it's light illuminated the dark abyss that was the world at night, he felt the wind blow against him again and he turned around ready to go back to the apartment. After quite a while of running Casey eventually made it back to the apartment room as the sun? started to rise making the world a tad brighter, everything was the same as he had left it, his jacket and pants sat on the couch, his guns were sitting in front of said couch, but he noticed something that he hadn't noticed before, there was a window on the right side of the couch.

Casey walked over to the window and look outside, he took in a sharp breath as he saw something standing in the street in front of the building, it was made out of a dark black misty fog like vapor, but it also had the form of a... cat, the black-fog-cat looked like Casey but it was also without any clothes on, the black-fog-cat also had two

bright almost fire like eyes and a literal glowing smile, it held Steve's lighter in it's right hand and it was making sure that Casey could see it to. Had that thing given Casey the lighter? Why? The black-fog-cat then dissolved into mist and flew into the building, Casey also saw that as the mist flew into the building a large gust of wind was kicked up by it, that was the wind that had created the movie-nado! He ran over to the door and pressed his body against it so that when the mist came for him it wouldn't be able to get in. Casey could hear the sound of wind coming from the hall heading for the door, he braced his body of impact but the mist simply flew in under the door "Oh right.. Oh shit!"

The mist then took it's cat form still holding Steve's lighter in it's hand. It stared at Casey with it's soulless white eyes, and it's just as equally soulless blinding white smile "W- what do you want?!"

The creature just stared at Casey with no change in it's face, when suddenly it dropped the lighter and dissolved into smoke, it then flew directly into Casey's nose and mouth, he tried his best to not breath in the smoke but it forced it's self into him. After a few seconds which seemed like an eternity of pain all of the black smoke had entered Casey, he stood there trying to cough the smoke out of his lungs but each time he did the smoke simply flew back into him simply, his vines started to turn black and were visible through his fur, even the ones in his eyes started to turn black.

He sank down to the ground gasping for air, he pounded the wall trying to cough the smoke out of him but eventually he didn't have any air in his lungs left to cough out, the room started to spin and darken, he stood up which made the room spin more, he gasped for air one last time before finally passing out from lack of oxygen. He hit the ground eyes closed, vines still black, but the smoke started to leave his nose and ears, the creature then took on it's cat form, stared at Casey for a second then turned back into mist and flew under the door and out of the building. "Hey."

"Hey!"

"Hey! Wake up!"

"Casey! Wake up!"



"WAKE UP!"

Casey's eyes bolted open gasping in shock, he stood up regaining his breath as he did, he took a quick glance to his left and right looking for that black-fog-cat but it wasn't here "Finally you're awake! That took for ever!"

Casey turned around and his eyes opened in shock which was something he was used to by now "GREGG?!"

The Fox nodded smiling, he was wearing his white jacket with blue sleeves, blue pants, but he was now wearing black shoes "Happy to see me?"

## 6. The Shadow Stalker

Casey backed away from Gregg in shock "H- How? D- Did you?"

Gregg shrugged "Dunno, just woke up here next to you. Spent a few hours trying to wake you up."

Casey put his hands over his face groaning "I hate this place!"

Gregg took a look around the room "I dunno, it's not bad. I actually kinda like this place."

Casey removed his hands from his face and stared at Gregg as he leaned against the wall casually one foot placed on the wall as well "How are you so calm! You're inside of a weird, twisted, almost upside down version of Possum Springs! We're the only people here! And from what I've seen, there's monsters everywhere!"

Gregg's face lit up when Casey mentioned monsters "Monsters?! Like, Demon Tower monsters?! That's awesome!"

Casey ran his right hand through the fur on top of his head "That's not awesome! They're really, really deadly monsters! I just burned down a building so I could get AWAY from one!"

Gregg put his hands in his pant pockets "Okay, alright. The monsters are deadly, I understand that but what I don't understand is how we got here."

Casey sighed and walked over to the couch next to Gregg before sitting down on it "I've lived through it and I barely understand myself. So, I was heading over to Jack's place, the uh guy that you met when Mae convinced us to go camping that one time."

"The guy that tried to sell us real estate on the moon while high on shrooms?"

Casey sighed again "No, the guy that almost had his eye taken out by Mae's total lack of fishing skills."

Gregg nodded "OH! Yeah him, he was a nice guy after he got over the

fact that Mae almost caught his eye instead of the fish."

Casey grabbed his black hoodie and put it on before continuing "Anyways, I stopped in the part of the woods in front of the Food Donkey when I was jumped by some robbed weirdos, one of the was named... Eide I think, they drugged me and dragged me all the way into the abandoned mines. The eventually threw me into a pretty big hole for some reason, and I just kept falling and falling, till I hit a thin layer of flesh mixed with fungus and I popped out of the hole in this world, and I was chased around by a monster for a while, and well here we are."

Gregg chuckled "Man, you got in here the cool way, I just woke up here next to you, confused, I kinda figured that you'd know what's going on here so I waited till you woke up... Also, you got any food here, I'm starving."

The sudden mention of food caused Casey's stomach to rumble, Casey sighed as he stood up to put on his pants "No. But I think I know were to get some, might not be fresh but It'll be better then nothing."

Gregg smiled, took his hands out of his pockets, and rubbed them together like a super villain that just created the most dastardly plan ever "Just tell me what to break."

Casey smiled "Man I didn't know how much I missed you till just now."

Casey slung the M16 over his back, the pistol was holstered in it's holster which was strapped to Casey's hip. Gregg stared at Casey's guns "Dude. I wish I could get one of those!"

Casey moved the M16 into a more comfortable spot on his back "Once we get some food we can look into that, for now stay behind me."

Gregg nodded as Casey walked over to the door and opened it, the two walked out of the building and into the street before Gregg finally asked where they were going "So, whats the place we're heading to?"

Casey looked around that area of town making sure it was safe before continuing "First we're going to head to the Click-Clack, then we're heading to the Food Donkey."

Gregg nodded and the two started to make their way over to the Click-Clack Diner "Why are we heading to the Click-Clack first? The Food Donk has better food anyways."

Casey looked at Gregg still walking forwards "We're going to need some water, the food may be okay but they always buy the best bottled water."

Gregg nodded, agreeing with Casey. After a few minutes of walking to the diner without any action they eventually reached the flipped diner, Gregg stared at it in amazement "Wow. Who flipped that?"

Casey shrugged "Don't know, rather not find out to be honest, but for right now. Help me get up there."

Gregg nodded as he ran over to the small concrete steps that would've let people walk up to the slightly elevated door, he put his hands on top of each other palms facing up so that he could boost Casey up onto the Click-Clack's side "Keep em steady."

Gregg nodded as Casey stepped onto Gregg's hands and was boosted up onto the Click-Clack's side, as he was boosted upwards the M16 almost hit Gregg in the face. Casey helped Gregg up onto the Click-Clack and the two took a look inside through the open door, the tables have always been bolted down to the floor, but the chairs weren't anywhere to be seen if they were still in the diner they would've been laying against the back wall which was now technically the floor of the diner due to it being flipped onto it's side, the lights were off but much like a lot of buildings in this world the inside seemed to glow slightly. Casey dropped down into the diner and landed on the wall/floor underneath them, Gregg dropped down next to Casey but almost fell onto his face when he landed luckily Casey helped him to regain his balance, the two walked over to the kitchen window that let people look into the kitchen from the rest of the diner, Casey climbed into the kitchen and Gregg decided to stay in the diner area alone.

As Casey rummaged through the kitchen as best he could looking for the bottled water Gregg took the free time to look around the flipped diner "Ya know, this place maybe the same Click-Clack in our world only flipped over it still feels different."

Casey heard Gregg but he was too busy looking for water to reply, a gust of wind flew over the Click-Clack's door making a slight whistling noise as it did. Casey opened one of the former ceiling cabinets and inside was a package of unopened bottle water, he pulled it out of the cabinet and let it drop to the floor "Found it!"

Gregg came running over grinning "Sweet!"

Casey grabbed a stake knife that was sitting next to him and used it to cut open the plastic packaging, he handed Gregg a bottle before unzipping his duffel bag so he could stuff the other bottles into it. Casey and Gregg stared at the open door above them "We didn't think this through."

Casey sighed "Yeah, we really didn't."

Gregg took a look around the diner trying to look for something to get them up there but there wasn't anything they could use "Damn, the only way we can get up there is if we can fly, or jump insanely high like Mae."

Casey nodded realizing that he also missed Mae, when suddenly wind blew into the diner and tossed Casey out of the building, he hit the ground on his back. The black-fog-cat then appeared in front of Casey, it still had those glowing fire like white eyes and mouth locked in a permanent smile, Casey grabbed the M16 and aimed it at the black-fog-cat "Who are you!"

the black-fog-cat didn't move it just stood there staring at Casey when suddenly "I. Am. You."

The creature's voice sounded like Casey's but it was distant and echo-y, it also sounded like a whisper because it sounded so distant, Casey stood up stilling aiming his gun at the creature "What the eff does that mean!?"

It hovered closer to Casey "I. Want. To. Be. You."

Casey tightened his grip on the gun and backed away from the creature "Why?!"

As he backed away from the creature it moved closer to him "I. Want. To. Be. Free. I. Want. Your. Life. I. Want. To. Be. Casey. Hartley. I. Will. Be. Casey. Hartley."

Casey finally fired at the creature but the bullets simply flew through it and hit the Click-Clack. The creature charged at Casey dissolving into it's mist form so it could reenter Casey's lungs, Casey jumped out of the way of the mist and ran from it but the mist was quickly getting closer and closer to Casey, when from on top of the Click-Clack Gregg yelled "Yo! Shadow Stalker! Come get some!"

He then jumped off of the Click-Clack and went straight through the mist causing it to separate long enough for the two of them to run far away from it. The mist then reformed and charged after Gregg and Casey getting closer to them quickly, Gregg looked behind himself and stared at the mist "How do we fight mist?!"

Casey didn't look at the mist or Gregg "I don't know!"

The mist got closer and closer to them the wind was howling in Casey and Gregg's ears as they ran. Casey then got an idea, he grabbed the duffel bag still running, he unzipped it and pulled out a flash light "This is actually really stupid!"

He then stopped and turned around, he turned on the flash light and shined it at the mist, the mist stopped suddenly in the light and started to steam, it squirmed around screeching in it's weird Casey whisper-y distant voice before flying away from them quickly. Casey started to laugh "That effing worked! Holy shit that worked!"

Gregg ran over to Casey smiling widely "That was awesome!"

Casey turned off the flash light and put it back inside of the duffel bag "Yeah. It kinda was, but earlier why did you call that thing Shadow Stalker?"

Gregg shrugged his face returning to a normal "I dunno, he just

reminds me of the Shadow Stalker from Demon Tower."

Casey thought about it and realized that it kinda did, the Shadow Stalker was a secret boss that is created when the main character Pale Cat's shadow gets possessed by the spirit of jealousy which did kinda fit with what the creature said before about wanting to become Casey "Well, we should probably head to the Food Donkey now."

Gregg grinned "You got it."

After a while of walking the two finally made it to the Food Donkey, Casey and Gregg walked into the store, it was dark and of course abandoned, the shelves were dirty, moved around from their original points of origin, some were even toppled over, some weren't even there, the floor was covered in leaves and vines, but the walls weren't they were just covered in dirt and hopefully not blood. Gregg turned to Casey "Split up or work together?"

Casey took a look around the store before answering "Um... Split up, and if anything happens you call me and I'll call you. Got it."

Gregg nodded and the two split up heading in different areas of the store, Gregg headed over to the produce section of the store while Casey went for the deli section. Casey searched through the shelves that were supposed to be kept cold by an A/C machine but without any power the shelf wasn't cold, he picked up a thawed package of hot dogs, he turned it around and looked at the expiration date on the back "Jan 4th, 2015." Casey sniffed the hot dogs after reading the expiration date, they smelled alright so they hadn't gone bad yet, he stuffed them into the duffel bag and continued searching. Casey searched the entire shelf but everything else was either gone or spoiled, when Gregg ran over to Casey a big smile on his face "Dude! You need to come see this!"

Gregg then led Casey over to the back of the store where they found an employs only area, Gregg pushed the door open and led Casey farther into the off limits area of the building, after a few seconds of jogging they eventually reached a large metal door Gregg turned towards Casey who was standing behind him "This is the craziest thing in this entire world, by far!"

He then pushed the door open and the two were immediately hit by a wave of cold air, Gregg had found a still functioning meat locker. Gregg ran into the meat locker and stopped in the center of the room "Isn't this cool! Like literally this place is cold, and there's still meat in here!"

Casey walked into the meat locker as well, he folded his arms over his chest and grabbed his sides due to the cold "Yeah it's cold and cool, but how are we gonna cook this stuff?"

Gregg put his hands on his hips somehow not effected by the temperature of the room "We'll have to cook them like cavemen! Use an open flame! Boy scouts style."

Casey chuckled "You just said we'd cook them like cavemen, then like boy scouts."

Gregg shrugged "What's the difference?"

Casey stood there a moment trying to figure out if there really was a difference between cavemen and boy scouts "Boy scouts speak a sophisticated langue while cavemen grunted at each other."

Gregg furrowed his brow "Dude, sophisticated langue? I'm pretty sure five to twelve year olds don't speak a sophisticated langue."

Casey sighed "You got me there... I also don't think you got the ages right for boy scouts."

Gregg shrugged "I'm probably close enough. Now then, how we gonna take all of this meat with us?"

Casey looked at the various kinds of meat that hung on meat hooks "I... Don't know, maybe we can take some, wrap them in plastic wrap, then take those with us and just come back here when we need more."

Gregg clapped his hands together and held them in front of his body "Awesome. Let's get wrapping!"

Casey turned around and walked out of the meat locker to go find some plastic wrap while Gregg stayed inside of the meat locker.



Casey had to walk all the way over to the produce section of the store to grab some plastic wrap, he then walked all the way back to the meat locker, once he reached the hall way in front of the meat locker he heard something making clicking noises, it was the first monster Casey had fought off, he wanted to take a moment to question how it was still here, if it had even died, or if it had just warped? through the wall in the glass factory but before he could he heard that it was eating something, Gregg was still in there! He grabbed the M16 and ran into the meat locker, the monster wasn't eating Gregg instead it was eating a pork chop that still had the hook in it, but Gregg still wasn't anywhere to be seen, the monster must've sensed or heard Casey because it stood up and turned around so it was facing Casey, it screeched at him before Casey fired off several rounds from the M16 into the monster's chest. The first few shots scared the monster and made it back away from Casey but after a while it started to realize that the bullets didn't really do much damage to it, the monster walked closer to Casey and he turned and ran from it, Casey ran into the main area of the store with the monster close behind him. Casey skidded to a stop and shot at the monster again but it didn't pay any attention to the bullets, it then lunged at Casey tackling him to the ground, the monster's head hovered over Casey's and slowly opened.

Casey tried his best to break free from the monster's grip but he couldn't, what he was able to do was reach his the pistol still strapped to his hip, when Gregg came running in from the meat locker, he must've been hiding from the monster "Hey! Tall pale and hideous!... I just realized how much that insult sucked! Come get some!"

The monster didn't look at Gregg it didn't even react to his shouting it just remained on top of Casey slowly bringing it's open mouth closer to Casey's face, Casey was finally able to grab the pistol and place it on the monster's side before shooting it, the monster screeched and got off of Casey the close range of the shot must've actually caused the monster to feel pain. Gregg started to run over to Casey as the monster regained it's balance when he slipped and fell directly in front of the monster's legs, it then stepped right through Gregg, like it's foot went straight through Gregg like he wasn't even there, the monster then charged at Casey again but luckily for him the monster had forced Casey into a very small area of the produce section where

they kept there knives, Casey then grabbed on that had been unpacked for some reason and jabbed it into the monster's gut, he let go of the knife and let it remain inside of the monster's gut, it recoiled away from Casey screeching in pain, it tried it's best to pull the knife out but it's large fingers couldn't properly grip the knife's hilt, as Gregg stood up the monster ran right through him again and into the meat locker area probably using the walls to travel to a place far away from Casey. Casey aimed the pistol at Gregg breathing heavily "What the eff just happened? How did it walk straight through you!?... Wait, you're not even here... Are you? You're a hallucination, created by the Shadow Stalker. Aren't you!?"

Gregg stood there trying his best to find the right words? or something "I- I- I am... I am a hallucination created by the Shadow Stalker, I don't know why, and I don't want to become Gregg either, I guess maybe because I'm like supposed to be a manifestation of your memories of Gregg technically making me both the real Gregg and a faker."

Casey tightened his grip on the pistol "Then how did you like, boost me up onto the Click-Clack? How did you go through the mist form of the Shadow Stalker if you're just a hallucination!? How do you know some much about your self and yet you don't know why you were made?! If you're really a hallucination that means that you can only be in areas I'm in, so how did you find the meat locker if I wasn't there?!"

Gregg sighed "Because, when ever the Shadow Stalker is around I become real, I can eat, drink, get hurt, and touch anything, when he's not around I become a figment of your imagination unable to be seen, heard, or felt by anything other then you, well just seen and heard. The reason why I know so much about my self and not know why I was made is because the Shadow Stalker programmed a message into you, when you were passed out you started to talk, you told me the rules of my life but that was pretty much it, I already thought I was Gregg but when you told me the rules I knew that I wasn't, and you told me to never tell awake you that I wasn't the real Gregg and if I did the Shadow Stalker, who called himself Shadow Casey, would kill me. And finally I was able to find the meat locker because... Well, stop thinking about me like a hallucination and more

like a ghost that is tied down to your brain, I can't go far from you but I can move on my own."

Casey's hands started to shake from both how long they had been holding the pistol and from slight fear "You- I- What does- What does any of this effing mean! You're a hallucination but you're not, and you were made by the Shadow Stalker for some unknown reason, and and and... GAH!"

He put the pistol back into its holster and sat down on the ground "You're not going to be able to leave my side judging by the rules of your existence, and you're not the real Gregg so I can't call you that."

Gregg walked over to Casey and sat down next to him "I may not be the real flesh and blood version of Gregg, but I'm built out of your memories of Gregg, so I'm as close to the original as you're going to be able to get right now, why not call me Gregg?"

Casey sighed "Because... It doesn't feel the same, you may be made out of my memories of Gregg but he had a life before me, and your life starts when I first met him."

Gregg also sighed "Yeah. I know... You can call me H-G!"

Gregg's sudden excitement startled Casey making him flinch "Why H-G?"

Gregg smiled "It's short for Hallucination Gregg!"

Casey grinned, even though Gregg wasn't the real Gregg he still acted like him, and the real Gregg always put a smile on Casey's face "Okay. H-G it is."

H-G's smile grew bigger "Awesome!"

The two sat there on the floor for a minute or two before Casey looked at H-G again "We should probably get going."

H-G nodded "That sounds like a good idea."

Casey and H-G stood up and made their way out of the store heading back towards the town.

## 7. A pig in Wolf's clothing

Casey opened the door to the apartment room and stepped in, behind him was H-G who also entered the room with Casey. Casey's duffel bag was filled with meat from the Food Donkey and his stomach had been rumbling since they entered the building, H-G rubbed his hands together "So. What's on the menu for tonight?"

Casey took of the M16 and the duffel bag, he then set the gun on the couch and carried the duffel bag into the kitchen "I'm thinking... Pork chops."

H-G smiled "I'ma cook the shit outta some pig!"

Casey sighed "You can't touch anything remember."

H-G groaned "Stupid hallucination rules."

Casey pulled out two pork chops and walked over to the oven. He wasn't sure if it would even turn on and if it did there was no guaranty that it wouldn't explode, he put the pork chops on a metal pan that was sitting on the counter and he put it inside of the open oven, he shut the oven and before turning it on he turned towards H-G "So.. If I die do you?"

H-G shrugged "I dunno, why do you ask?"

Casey sighed "Just making sure."

He then turned on the oven and... it turned on, without exploding. yay! Casey walked into the living room and sat down on the couch and H-G sat down next to him "How can you do that?"

H-G stared at Casey in confusion "Do what?"

Casey shrugged "You can't touch anything, your hand goes right through everything, but you can sit on the couch. How does that work?"

H-G shrugged "I dunno, I just do."

Casey sighed "Yeah. It's not the weirdest thing here."

H-G sniffed the air "I can smell the meat cooking, but I can't smell any seasoning."

Casey shrugged slightly "Couldn't find any. Besides in this world, I'm eating to make sure I don't die of starvation not because food tastes good."

H-G reclined into the corner of the couch "I wish I could eat right now. I mean I can't nor do I feel hungry but I still want to."

Casey grinned slightly "Next time the Shadow Stalker shows up I'll be sure to ask him to let you taste some pork."

H-G chuckled. The two sat on the couch together for several minutes, they'd make small talk very small talk that really didn't make sense. Eventually Casey started to nod off as he waited for the pork chops to finish cooking, Casey slowly started to fall asleep while H-G was talking about something that he wasn't listening to "But I don't think that he's gonna do that so how are we going to fight him off?"

Casey groggily nodded not paying attention "Yeah..."

H-G looked at Casey slightly concerned "You good dude?"

Casey nodded his head again this time he did hear what H-G said "Yeah... I'm fine, just... Tired. Haven't had a good night's sleep in a while."

H-G tried to pat Casey on the back but his hand went through him "Oh yeah..."

Casey started to giggle as he slipped closer and closer to falling asleep "Dude, I'm sorry."

H-G raised an eyebrow in confusion "Why?"

Casey's giggles started to subside "I'm the reason why you're... Alive? Real? Existing? One of those things, but I'm the reason why you can't do anything so I'm sorry."

H-G sighed "Dude... It's not your fault. If the Shadow Stalker wasn't obsessed with you he wouldn't have created me, he should be sorry. Also, I'm not mad at you I'm actually kinda happy to be here... Or not be here."

Casey started to giggle some more "...You have all of my memories of Gregg, right?"

H-G nodded "Do you remember the time that Gregg came out as gay to me and Mae?"

H-G nodded again smiling slightly "Mae was so happy, her and the real Gregg could check out guys together..."

Casey stretched himself out slightly "...Do you also remember when Gregg... Told me that, he loved me.. Like had a crush on me?"

H-G nodded slightly blushing now, before Casey asked "Are you gay?"

H-G took a moment to think about it before shrugging "I don't know."

Casey yawned "...Do you remember Albert Snow?"

H-G nodded again but this time he said something under his breath probably cussing at Albert while Casey said "Dude... Eff Albert."

H-G grinned "Yeah! Eff Albert!"

Casey's eyes started to close by themselves as he started to fall asleep "...Do you think I'm ever getting out of here?"

H-G looked at the sleepy Casey smiling "Yeah man, you'll get out. I'll help you. You'll get to see Mae, the real Gregg, your mom, your dad. You'll get to see everyone again. I promise."

Casey grinned again "Thanks man... Do... You think that... You would be able to leave with me?"

H-G shrugged but as he did Casey finally went to sleep and he mumbled to himself as he did "I'll see you soon... Mae, Gregg."

Once Casey went to sleep H-G was left alone in the living room

twiddling his thumbs. Casey was suddenly shaken awake by Mae, he lifted his head off of his hand causing his neck to ache in pain from being held up. He took a look around the bus remembering where he was.

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August 21st, 2001. Possum Springs High School bus 138, field trip.

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Mae had a big grin on her face, she sat on Casey's left side next to the bus's aisle, while Casey sat next to the window "Were almost there!"

Casey stretched his back yawning slightly "I told you to wake me when we GOT there."

Mae rolled her eyes "But if I waited until we got in there you wouldn't be able to see the statue! OH! Here it comes!"

Casey and Mae both stared out of the window next to them as the statue passed, said statue was a monument to a fictional character that had put this town on the map, the statue was made out of bronze while the base was made out of marble, it was a wolf holding a bow and arrow staring off into the distance, the wolf wore a robin hood looking outfit except it didn't have the hat, on the marble base was a bronze plaque that read "The Forest Guardian, the most loyal servant of the Forest God sworn to defend the forest from those that wanted to destroy it. Refurbished by the Wolf City Comity of historic preservation."

Mae was much more excited to see the statue then the actual museum that they were going to but Casey was still kinda mad that she had woken him up to see a statue of someone who didn't even exists. The bus rolled to a stop in front of the museum's marble steps, everyone got off in a semi-orderly line and stood in front of the steps waiting for the writing teacher to do her thing before letting them go in. Mae stood next to Casey on his left side, she stared at the almost Olympus level of architecture that was the museum with a big smile "I thought you hated museums."

Mae stared at Casey and threw her arms up into the air "I don't like museums with old dusty rocks and bones! But a museum filled with

hundreds of book of ghost stories! And wax statues of ghost story characters! Sign me right the eff up!"

Casey chuckled and put his hands in his hoodie's pockets. When from their right someone yelled over to them "Mae! Casey!"

They both looked over to the person yelling and it was Gregg, he was running towards them, Mae and Casey both yelled in unison "Gregg!"

He eventually reached Casey and Mae with a big smile on his face. Following Gregg from behind him was his boyfriend Albert Snow, a white wolf who wore a blue shirt with a Superman logo in the center of it, brown cargo pants, and heavy duty brown work boots. Casey waved at Albert as Mae hugged Gregg, Albert was of regular height so he was only a few inches taller then Casey which meant that Casey was tall enough to be at Albert's neck level, which would make Gregg at Casey's shoulder level, and Mae at Gregg's shoulder level. Albert stood next to Casey while Gregg stood next to Mae, and finally Miss Hammond the writing teacher finally stepped in front of the high school group holding a stack of museum maps that she was going to hand out to everybody once she finished her speech thing "I hope that everyone know where we are and what we are doing here?"

Mae immediately raised her arm up into the air so she could be called on for the answer which was something she hardly ever did so everyone stared at her in shock "Were at the National Museum of Historical-Fiction Classics! And the reason why we are here is because we are about to learn about Possum Spring's greatest legend. The Tale of the Forest God!"

Hammond smiled at Mae "Very good miss Borowski!"

Miss Hammond would then proceed to tell the class about various safety tips that was mandatory to talk about, Casey looked over to Mae "Since when have you raised your hand in class?"

Mae rolled her eyes "One, since I KNEW what were talking about. And two, this isn't class, this is a field trip."

Casey shrugged "Class has a teacher talk to us about "important" stuff, field trip has a teacher talking about "important" stuff to us. We're



forced to learn in both, they seem pretty much the same."

Mae stood there for a moment realizing that Casey was right "Yeah... But a field trip is inherently more fun then normal class."

Casey grinned "I guess your right."

Hammond then called out "Now it's time for everyone to pair up and head inside!"

Gregg ran over to Albert and grabbed his hand "I've got mine! Which I guess means that you and Mae are going to pair up?"

Gregg pointed his finger at both Casey and Mae. Casey shrugged "If Mae wants to."

Mae looked around but everyone was already paired up even, Steve Scriggins who hadn't gone with Casey for some reason "Looks like I don't have a choice."

Casey shrugged again and pulled out his left hand so Mae could grab hold of it but she looked at him like he just said something really stupid "Hammond's orders."

Mae sighed and rolled her eyes before grabbing Casey's hand "She treats us like a bunch of kids..."

Casey, Mae, Gregg, and Albert all walked into the museum. While walking, Casey shrugged and said "She was a first grade teacher just a few weeks ago, it's gonna take some time before she readjusts."

Mae didn't reply so she must've understood now. Once everyone had entered the building Miss Hammond made everyone form one large group so that she could give them a historical lesson on the building it's self, Mae had zoned out thinking about who knows what, Casey looked like he was paying attention but he was thinking about what would happen if he could some how set up a ramp on the side of a cliff, skate down it, and then hit the ramp, Gregg was actually paying but he had too, a few months ago his grades were starting to slip towards F- and his parents gave him a wake up call by taking away all of his band equipment so that he could focus on his work, now that Gregg's grades were rising back up to B+ his parents gave him

back his equipment but only if he kept his grades up, and Albert was fascinated by this kind of stuff so he was paying attention on his own accord. It took twenty minutes for Hammond to finish the history lesson on the building, she said something about how the building was once a mansion for slave owners but the slaves revolted and burned the mansion to the ground, then it was rebuilt as a hotel but it went bankrupt so the owners sold it to the guys that turned the hotel into a museum.

Once she finally did finish Hammond said that everyone could wonder around for the next two hours but they had to find at least three things to learn about before they left and that they were going to have to remember the history of the building which Casey knew he was going to fail on, Mae pulled Casey into a section of the museum dedicated to the stories of Lucas Buford one of Mae's favorite writers mostly because her granddad read her Lucas' stories to her when she was young, while Gregg and Albert went to a section next to the one Mae and Casey were heading into which was dedicated to a character called the Forgotten Man a character that appeared in multiple horror stories but never had an official creator. Mae ran over to a wax statue of Adina Astra the Astronomer a female Crocodile character Lucas Buford had made, the statue wore a red Karakul hat on it's head, a red dress like robe, a dark blue/green cloak, red pants, and black hiking boots, as well as the yellow tinted glasses Adina had gotten from her lover in her second story, the statue was posed so that Adina looked like she was exploring or inspecting something, she held a lantern with her right hand and was holding it over her head, and had an open book which showed various constellations in it with her left hand.

Mae read the plaque in front of the Adina statue "Adina Astra, the Astronomer. At a young age Adina had a fascination with the stars, she would regularly sneak up onto the roof of her childhood home and stare at the stars, and one day she wished that she would be visited by a creature that knew everything about the stars. That following day she met a young deer at school."

Mae pointed at the wax statue that stood across from the one that the two were staring at, the statue in question was a female deer, there was two versions of her standing on the same base, one version her

had her wearing blue cloak like Adina in every way, and a black Karakul hat, while the second one was just the first one but made to look like a ghost, they both stood straight and had their hands at their sides "The Deer and Adina spent countless hours discussing various things but most of their discussions were about the stars, from that point on the Deer and Adina would become inseparable and eventually they would become lovers. Sadly during one of Adina's travels the Deer grew deathly ill and before Adina could return home her lover died in bed, Adina would then bury her lover next to her favorite lake aptly named the Frozen Lake thanks to it being frozen most of the year. After Adina buried her lover she vowed to discover all of the missing stars in the sky and one day bring the complete map of the stars to her lover's grave so that they would both complete their mission of finding every star not yet found."

Casey grinned "Kinda lengthy, but enjoyable."

Mae turned around and faced Casey "Now if only I could get you to read it."

Casey shrugged "Buford's stories sound good, but they're too cryptic for me."

Mae shrugged "Your loss."

Casey grinned "Guess so."

Mae then led Casey over to miniature recreation of The Huncher's house from one of Adina's stories which Casey had forgotten the name of. For the next hour Mae and Casey spent their time in the Lucas Buford area of the museum, Mae was absolutely ecstatic running too and from different wax statues, miniatures, and paintings a big smile on her face while Casey watched Mae run around a grin on his face as well. When Casey grabbed Mae's attention by tapping her shoulder "I'm gonna go find us some water... Are you going to be fine by your self in here?"

Mae nodded "I'll be fine."

Casey also nodded and walked out of the room to search for a

vending machine or something that would give him water, he turned one of the corners and headed down the hall searching for the water dispenser he needed right now, when he heard voices coming from an area off limits to the public for the time, one was of a female and the other was... Albert, Casey poked his head around the corner of the door leading into the off limits area, the room was still being developed but it had some complete things in there, the one that quickly caught his eye there was a white wooden door with an ax stuck in the middle of it mimicking the scene from the Shining movie which must've meant that this room was for Stephen King. In the center of the room was Albert who was talking to a female cat, she wore a purple tee shirt, blue shorts, and black heels, her fur was just as white as Albert's and her eyes were a nice combination of dark and light blue, Casey continued to watch them when the cat said something that made Albert laugh, the two just continued to talk to each other when suddenly Albert pulled the cat in for a kiss, Casey watched in horror as Albert kissed the cat, his blood was boiling with rage, his nails dug into the wall, and he clenched his teeth together in anger. The kiss then ended but it seemed like it took forever, the cat then walked away from Albert heading towards the exit/entrance door that Casey was looking through, he quickly darted into the room and hid behind a wooden crate next to the door, the cat exited the room and Casey could hear that Albert was also leaving the room.

Casey stood up, grabbed Albert by his shirt with both of his hands, and slammed him against the wall next to the door "Who was that?"

Albert winced in pain when his back hit the wall "Who was who?"

Casey shoved Albert's back against the wall again "That cat! Who was that!?"

Albert sighed "Casey... Listen to me please... Don't tell Gregg about this, and I won't tell everyone about this."

Casey's face became confused before Albert shoved his hand into Casey's hoodie jacket and pulled out his meth pipe. Casey stepped away from Albert and pulled out a knife that Gregg had given him a while ago "When did you find out?"

Albert stepped away from the wall slightly still holding the meth pipe

"My brother was a stoner so I know what meth smells like. So if found out when I met you."

Casey clenched his fists "You son of a bi-"

"Don't tell Gregg, and I won't tell everyone. Got it?"

Casey stood there fists still clenched, blood still boiling "...Fine."

He then put his knife back into his pocket and Albert handed Casey his meth pipe back and Casey shoved it back into his hoodie pocket. Albert then walked out of the room and Casey stood in there still furious when he finally left the room heading back to where Mae was.

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Casey was startled awake by the sound of the oven's finished buzzer going off, H-G jumped when Casey suddenly bolted upright "HOLY SHIT!"

Casey rubbed his eyes, the fur on his head was all messed up he looked over to H-G still sleepy "SorrymanIwasstartledawake."

Casey's words stuck together due to how sleepy he still was, H-G grinned "It's fine man. Go get your pork chops."

Casey also smiled and stood up from the couch. He walked into the kitchen rubbing his left eye with his left hand, he pulled open the oven, put on a heat mitten and pulled the pork chops out of the oven, he grabbed a plate from one of the cabinets and put the two pork chops on the plate burning his fingers slightly. He walked into the living room and sat down on the couch holding the plate, he picked up one of the pork chops with his fingers, H-G raised one of his eyebrows "You not like forks?"

Casey swallowed a bite of pork before answering "Couldn't find any utensil in there."

H-G nodded and didn't continue. Casey ate both of the pork chops, once he finished his pork chops he put the plate in the kitchen sink and walked back into the living room "So... Can you sleep?"

H-G shrugged "Haven't tried yet."

Casey took of his hoodie and tossed into the bedroom "You should probably try tonight. Cuz I'm going to sleep."

H-G stretched "Alright. So... I get the couch right?"

Casey nodded and walked into the bedroom, he came back out of the bedroom holding a pillow and a blanket "I found these in there and I'm not sure if these go through you or not but give it a try."

Casey then tossed the pillow over to H-G and he caught it "Cool!"

Casey then tossed the blanket over to H-G and stood there waiting. Finally H-G was under the covers on top of the couch he hadn't taken off any of his clothes but they probably were physically apart of him "H-G, I'm just going to be over in that bedroom."

H-G looked at Casey "And I need to know that because?"

Casey shrugged "Just in case the Shadow Stalker comes in here while you're awake."

H-G nodded "Got it."

Casey also nodded and walked into the bedroom, he laid down on the bed and got under it's covers, he stared at the ceiling for a bit remembering his dream from earlier "Eff you Albert... Where ever you are."

He then rolled over onto his side and closed his eyes going to sleep at the same time H-G did out on the couch.

## 8. Broken dreamer

Casey stood alone inside of a large stone cavern, there was no entrance or exit, but something about the cavern seemed familiar to Casey. He then realized what it was, the hole, the same hole that transported him to that twisted version of Possum Springs was in the center of this cavern, there also wasn't any of those weird vines in here as well. Casey looked around the cavern, it didn't look like the one that the hole was in before it just looked like a regular cave, his back was turned to the hole when he could feel the ground vibrate, he could hear the sound of something whispering? whistling?... singing? He turned around and saw that there was a faint red glow coming from the hole, it seemed to be coming from deep within the hole but he didn't want to get anywhere near it "&#(\*&(\*^"

Casey looked around the cavern "#\*\*#&(("

Nobody else was in there with Casey except whatever was making that red light "&\*\*\*\$#%# !%^&(&^"

Casey backed away from the hole slowly "#\*(&\*\*&\*(&(\*&())&\*&#&)&#&)\*(&(\*&(\*^\*(&\*&"

The red glow started to grow brighter and so did the strange noise almost as if it started to was climbing out of the hole "(\*(&)\*&\*^&^!#&^(\*\*^#&&#\*(\*^&"

Casey's back bumped into the wall of the cavern, he didn't have anywhere else to go and whatever was in that hole was coming closer "\*(&()(\*!)(\*&!"

Casey covered his eyes "Shut up!"

The noise echoed through his head like it was already on top of him ")\*(&(!\*(&#(((

The noise was still able to get into Casey's head "Who are you!?"

"\*(\*&&#(\*\*#&\*!"

Casey squatted down as tears began to form on his eyes "What do you

want!? Get out of my head!"

Even though he was scared he almost felt like his emotions weren't his own, that he wasn't scared for himself instead he was scared for someone else, his actions didn't really even feel like his own either  
"\*(\*\*(&())\_+ +\_+ :?"

The red light was now glowing brighter like it was almost at the top and the cavern started to shake causing small pebbles to fall from the roof of the ceiling and onto Casey's head ": + (\$)(!"

Casey closed his eyes and his tears finally rolled down his face "What do you want from me!?"

Suddenly he could feel that there was a source of immense heat coming from in front of him.

There was now a soft yet extremely present rumble was also coming from in front of him, Casey could feel the rumbling throughout his entire body it was shaking him as if he was cold "\*( (\*&(#(! ((\*&"

Casey didn't want to open his eyes, he didn't want to stand up, he didn't want to uncover his ears he just wanted it all to stop, he wanted the feeling of his emotions and actions not really being his own to also stop, he just wanted to go home "LEAVE ME THE EFF ALONE!"

He could feel a massive gust of hot wind hit him just before "**MAE BOROWSKI! YOU WILL NEVER ESCAPE MY GRASP!**"

Once he heard Mae's name get yelled he immediately opened his eyes and saw that he wasn't in the cavern anymore, he was still squatting down, and he was inside of... the apartment room bedroom? Casey stood up and looked at the bed and he saw that he was still in it sleeping "Holy... H-G?! You need to come in here-"

As he was yelling to H-G he turned to face the door and standing in front of the door was the Shadow Stalker "What the eff!?"

He jumped back and kept his distance from the Stalker "Casey. Hartley. It. Is. Time. For. You. To. Find. Me. It. Is. Time. For. Me. To. Become. Casey. Hartley."



Casey looked past the Stalker and saw that anything beyond the bedroom was just a black void "How are you doing this?"

The Stalker stepped closer to Casey "I. Am. Connected. To. You. Casey. Hartley. I. Will. Become-"

"Yeah yeah, you'll become me I get it! But how the eff are you doing this? Talking to me in my sleep?"

The Stalker looked at the Casey on the bed then back to the real? one "I. Am. Still. Inside. Of. You. Your. Lungs. Are. Lind. With. My. Being. I. Am. Apart. Of. You."

Casey could feel his breathing alter when the Stalker told him that he was still inside of Casey "Wait... What was that cavern? With the hole, the red light, the heat, that weird noise, that yell? Did you do that?"

The Stalker shook it's head slowly "No... It. Was. Another. Someone. That. Wants. You. Alive... Someone. That. Wants. To. Use. You."

The Stalker then crept closer to Casey and he backed away from the living shadow as it did "What do you mean another? What does he want? And if he wants to use me then why did he yell Mae's name?"

The Stalker stopped moving "I. Do. Not. Know. What. He. Wants. With. You. But. He. Is. Currently. Trying. With. All. Of. It's. Might. To. Get. To. Margaret. Borowski."

Casey clenched his fists "Don't ever use Mae's full name again."

The Stalker then crept closer to Casey and he backed away from it but his back bumped into the wall behind him "I. Do. Not. Care. For. Margaret. Borowski. Right. Now. I. Only. Care. For. Casey. Hartley."

It then dissolved into it's mist form and entered Casey's nose and mouth. He collapsed to the floor gasping for air as it had entered his body when he was exhaling a breath, he clawed at the ground and dragged himself towards the door which only led to a empty black void "H...G...Hel- Help... ME!"

His vision started to blur and darken, he tired to stand up but as he

did he fell onto his back which caused him to cough out some of the Shadow Stalker but it just reentered his body. Just like last time all of his veins started to turn black, he gasped a few more times before finally passing out and dying.

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Casey bolted upright in the bed in a cold sweat gasping "I'm alive! Holy shit I'm alive!"

H-G ran in, he looked like despite the fact that he was a hallucination like he had bed head "What's going on!?"

Casey started to laugh as his panicked emotions and adrenaline started to die down "I'm sorry, I just had a strange... Vision-dream-message-thing."

H-G looked like he wasn't even close to awake yet "And I'm guessing it ended with you dying?"

Casey nodded "What um, what was the sleep thing about?"

Casey threw the covers off of him and stood up "So... It started with me in a cavern and in the center of it was the hole that brought me here. And after a while something started to come out of it and was like either whispering, whistling, singing, or talking to me. I did and felt stuff that didn't really feel like I was doing or feeling it, eventually the thing must've finally come out of the hole and it yelled 'Mae Borowski. You will never escape my grasp.' and when I opened my eyes I was in a version of this bedroom except it was floating in a

black void, and I was still on the bed asleep. Also the Shadow Stalker was standing in front of the door and told me that it was time for me to find him, time for him to become me."

H-G took a moment to absorb everything Casey just said "... So... What does that mean?"

Casey walked over to the living room passing by H-G and H-G followed Casey "I don't know... But I guess if we're going to stop the Stalker we're going to have to find him and stop him, maybe even kill him if possible... Or die trying."

H-G stretched as he followed Casey to the couch "I prefer not dying if that's a real option."

Casey picked up his hoodie and put it on "Yeah me too."

After Casey put on his hoodie he walked into the kitchen and made himself some bacon, once the bacon strips were finished he sat down on the couch and ate them while H-G just kinda walked around the apartment trying to wake up more. Casey walked out of the kitchen after putting his plate in the kitchen sink and put on his M16, H-G tried to touch Casey's duffel bag so he could hand it to him but his hand went through it which made Casey grin slightly. Once Casey put on his gear and ready to go find the Shadow Stalker he looked over to H-G "You ready to go?"

H-G nodded and stood up "Yeah, let's go."

Casey and H-G then walked out of the apartment room and headed down the stairs, once they left the building Casey and H-G stopped in front of the door, Casey looked over to H-G "Where should we go first?"

H-G shrugged "I don't know... He could be anywhere in this world. If the Shadow Stalker wants you to find him he should've told you where he was."

Casey sighed "Probably should've... So, if he wants to be me, he'd go to my favorite place in this city. Which would be... The party spot in the woods."

H-G nodded "Welp then that's our destination."

Casey shrugged "Guess so."

The two then made their way over to the woods and entered it heading for the party spot, an area in the woods that all of the town's teenagers would meet up and well... party, that was the first place that Casey had ever smoked a meth pipe before which is what made it his favorite spot in town. The two walked through the forest, the walk/hike was harder for Casey then it was for H-G because he could pass threw everything. They had been walking/hiking for about half an hour and they weren't even half way there yet, Casey would normally skate along the highway to the party spot or have Steve take his brother's car and have Steve drive him to the spot so this hike was something new to Casey but he knew how to get there from the woods thanks to Jack who normally walked to the party spot, Casey was sweating and stank from this long hike while H-G was just fine in fact he looked like he was quite refreshed from the hike, H-G looked over to the sweaty Casey who was panting slightly "You feeling good?"

Casey took in a deep breath "Yeah, I'm fine... I can keep going, and if I need to, I'll make a pit stop."

H-G nodded "Got it."

Casey also nodded and the two continued walking forwards.

Three or so hours latter and they were probably about half of the way there, Casey was sweaty, stinky, and pretty tired while H-G was of course still just fine. Casey's legs felt like jelly he couldn't walk much farther "H-G, I gotta take a rest."

Casey then sat down on a large rock behind him, despite the fact that the sky seemed to be always overcast it was actually pretty hot in the woods and it felt like the sun was directly over the trees shining down on Casey so it could cook him, H-G sat down on the ground in front of Casey "You got any water in the bag?"

Casey nodded and unzipped the duffel bag, he pulled out a bottle of water and opened it before taking a drink of the warm water. Casey

took five minutes to finish the water and to finally regain his stamina so they could continue on wards "Okay H-G lets get going."

H-G stood up at the same time Casey did and the two continued forwards, it took another three hours and a few more pit stops but they finally made it to the party spot, Casey whipped some sweat from his brow and grinned seeing the end of their journey was in front of them "Finally! I really don't care if the Shadow Stalker is here or not! I'm just glad to finally make it!"

H-G smiled at Casey and the two walked down the small hill they were on. The party spot looked relatively like how it did the last time Casey saw it, at the center of the entire area was a medium sized pit for fires that was currently unlit and filled with ash, dotted around the area were folding chairs, some were torn up, some were on their sides, some were standing perfectly upright but covered in those vines much like the entire forest and even the pit, the way the vines covered the pit made it look like the vines had put out the fire themselves. If they were going to fight the Shadow Stalker they were going to have to light that fire again due to the fact that the Stalker seemed to be weak to light, Casey walked over to the fire pit while H-G headed over to a table that had been flipped on it's side and covered in vines "This is... Kinda depressing."

Casey nodded as he looked at the fire pit trying to find any logs that might've been still intact enough to be used again "Yeah it is... It helps to remember that this place isn't Possum Springs it's just a upside down version of our.. My home not the real one-"

"No I mean it's depressing cuz the beer cooler is empty!"

Casey looked over to H-G who had a big grin on his face and was also looking over to Casey to see if the joke had worked but Casey just rolled his eyes and returned his gaze back to the fire pit. H-G inspected the open beer cooler, it was empty but by empty he meant that there wasn't any beer in it, there was some pools of water from when there was ice in it but that was pretty much it. Casey tore a vine in two and pushed the ashes in the pit around trying to find any un-burnt logs when his hand felt something, it felt like fabric, Casey pulled his hand away from the pit and looked over to H-G who was busy looking around, he then brushed some more ash away and felt

around, he could feel more fabric, it felt like jacket fabric, like the fabric of his hoodie. Casey stood up quickly and looked over to H-G "You need to get over here now!"

H-G came running over to Casey "What's up?"

Casey turned to face H-G and put his hand on H-G's shoulder "Oh no..."

Casey then looked down at the fire pit and at the spot where he felt the fabric "That's the Shadow Stalker."

H-G squatted down and inspected the fire pit "Is he... Dead?"

Casey shook his head "I don't think so."

H-G poked the spot Casey had felt the fabric at "Is he asleep?"

Casey knelt down next to H-G "Yeah probably."

H-G poked the fabric a few more times "What now?"

Casey shrugged and stood up "We could... Set him on fire see what that does to him... We could... Wait for him to wake up and THEN start the fire so we could have an even battle."

H-G stood up "If we set him on fire now he could just quickly dissolve into mist and get away from the light... If we wait for him to wake up and then start the fire he wouldn't be able to use any of his powers so he wouldn't even be able to get away."

Casey stood there thinking about what to do "It. It's probably safer to wait."

He didn't sound sure about the plan but honestly he didn't want to start the fire, have the Shadow Stalker get away and make Casey find him again. H-G walked over to Casey holding a pile of logs in his arms "You think this is enough?"

Casey on the other hand was sitting down on a stump M16 aimed at the fire pit, he inspected the pile "It should work, but I'm gonna go find some gasoline and once we light the fire I'm gonna dump the gas

into the fire and see what happens."

H-G set the logs down in front of him "Where are you going to find gas?"

Casey stood up and let the M16 go "There's an abandoned gas station down the highway and somehow it still has fresh gas in it."

H-G sat down on the ground "Okay, be quick. I don't want to be left alone with him."

H-G motioned his head in the direction of the Shadow Stalker and Casey nodded before walking away from the party area heading for the gas station. He then stopped dead in his tracks and spun around "Can you even be left alone?"

H-G shrugged his head looking at the fire pit "I don't know, worst that could happen is that I suddenly appear in front of you at some point during your trip."

Casey ran his hand through the fur on top of his head "Yeah I guess so."

Casey then sighed and resumed his trip to the gas station, possibly alone, possibly not, it just depends on what happens along the way.

## 9. White Fish

Casey hopped over a small creek that still had some water flowing through it, the water was brown in color and actually smelled like dirty laundry, once he landed on the other side the M16 that was strapped to his back tapped him on the hip which sent a slight twinge of shock through his nerves. H-G hadn't randomly appeared in front of Casey since he left him back at the party spot so that was a good sign? It had been about forty minutes since he left H-G alone and he was probably about half way to the abandoned gas station, that gas station once sat on the side of a road that lead into the city nearest to Possum Springs called September Valley, but the gas station eventually started to lose more and more money as cars began to improve letting them drive for longer and longer distances and not having to stop as often to fill up it's tank, eventually nobody used the road so the state shut it down and had an extension added to the newly built highway reconnecting Possum Springs to September Valley.

But now, the only people that knew about the gas station where Steve, Casey, and probably some criminals like murderers or kidnappers. As Casey hiked towards the gas station he couldn't help but feel like someone was watching him, he knew it wasn't the Shadow Stalker because he was under the fire pit back at the party area, which only meant it could've been that monster he met before the Shadow Stalker although he hoped it was just his nerves messing with him and it wasn't really anything, but he remembered something in the back of his mind. In one of his dreams the Shadow Stalker had told him that someone else, some sort of third party, was also trying to get to Casey for some sort of reason, could that be who was watching me? Casey shook his head "No. Nobody is watching me, nobody is following me, and I'm talking to myself because even though I just said that I'm alone it didn't help me."

Casey finally reached the gas station, it had taken twenty minutes but he finally made it. He walked over to the front door which wasn't covered in those vines, in fact the store just looked like a dirtier version of it's normal version, there wasn't any vines, the same windows that were broken from before were still broken, despite all



of that it made Casey feel even worse, as if it was mocking him say "You'll never see home again, this is as close as you get." He pushed open the door and walked into the gas station. He took a look around the gas station, there was random things scattered across the ground, random candy wrappers, cigarette boxes, plastic bottles, and various medical products. He walked to the back of the building and hopped over the cashier counter, he walked over to the supply closet and opened the door, as he opened the door a mop fell down and made Casey jump back, sighing and grinning slightly about the embarrassing moment he looked into the closet.

Some of the shelves had been broken off of the walls and were lying on the ground, those that were still on the wall had various cleaning products on them, most of their labels had peeled off due to age and poor conditions, the only one that was completely readable said "Blacky's Super Detergent!" but the thing Casey was here for was sitting down on the floor in the corner of the small closet. He picked up the red gas canister and shook it next to his ear, the gas sloshed around inside of the canister which made Casey smiled. Nobody knew how the gas canisters kept on getting refilled but ever week somehow they would be refilled with no explanation "I wonder if those cultists filled them up."

Casey started to walk away from the closet but before he could climb over the counter he remembered that he had left his the lighter back at the apartment room, he groaned and turned around, as he did he saw that sitting on the counter over on his left side was a lighter. Casey walked over to the lighter and picked it up, it looked like one of those candle lighters with the red handle, he pressed the ignition switch and the lighter instantly produced a flame "Awesome."

He turned off the lighter and climbed over the counter. He walked back towards the front door of the gas station but before he could open it he heard something fall over behind him, he quickly spun around and saw that nothing was there he also noticed that he had raised the lighter as if he was going to burn whoever knocked over whatever was knocked over, he turned back around and saw some thing that made all of the color in his face to drain away, it created a pit in his stomach, it made his eyes widen in shock, and he dropped the lighter and the gas canister. The gas station was floating on a

chunk of ground in what looked like space, as he stared out into the space like void a large white fish flew past the front of the building, the fish seemed to glow a bright white and it illuminated the inside of the gas station and covered Casey in it's bright white light, he looked down at himself and saw that he had changed colors, his pants and shoes now seemed to glow a very dark blue in color with his shoes being much darker then his pants, his hoodie on the other hand glowed a very bright almost pale blue, his white under shirt now glowed the same color his hoodie did but it was slightly darker, and his fur glowed an almost grayish black in color with a slight blue aura, and he could just slightly see his reflection in the gas station's window which let him see that his iris glowing a bright red, and the rest of his eyes were a bright white, Mae had always said that she had nightmare eyes but right now Casey had real nightmare eyes.

Casey opened the front door slowly still not holding the lighter or the canister, he crept towards the edge of the gas station's chunk of ground just in time to see another giant white fish to fly by, he looked over the edge of the chunk of ground and saw that whatever strange void he was in was infinite stretching in all directions for ever, it made him feel small and insignificant. Suddenly he heard the sound of a train's whistle which made him jump back from the edge of the chunk of ground, in front of him he could see the ghostly images of a train's windows illuminated by the lights inside of the cars zoom by in front of him, but that was all he could see, he could see the cars the windows were supposed to be apart of, in fact where the rest of the train should've been was just white fog like smoke, the white fish from before flew through the white fog but it didn't move or change. Suddenly he could see something out of the corner of his eye, Casey looked over to it and saw that next to him was a small little cloud of pitch black fog, then the chunk of ground he was standing on crumbled to pieces but he didn't fall downwards, no, he fell sideways heading straight towards the ghostly image of a train's windows.

He passed straight through one of the windows and was flung out of a chimney. He landed on the roof the chimney was connected to and could feel the wind flying past him, he sat up and saw that he was moving, the roof and building he was one was moving, Casey ran over to the right edge of the roof and looked over it, he saw that the

building he was on was in fact a train car, he backed away from the edge of the roof and looked around, he saw that the train he was on stretched for what seemed to be infinity, and something about the train was familiar to him as if he had been here before, he looked up into the sky and saw that there was a giant blue moon in the sky, it seemed so distant but just a close, along with the moon there was also tall, black, towering buildings and smoke stacks like the ones on top of the glass factory. Just then the realization hit him this train, this town, it was Possum Springs! or at least select buildings from the town. From behind him he could here faint whispers, Casey turned around and stared at the chimney, something that took him too long to realize was that every action he made since he changed colors felt like it was extremely floaty, like how you feel when the dentist has you breath that funny gas before he pulls out one of your teeth, to be more specific every action he took even just standing there and breathing felt like he was floating in a dream.

The chimney's smoke started to bunch up together and form the same black cloud from the gas station, once it was fully formed it flew into the sky and the blue moon hit it with a beam of ghostly light and the black cloud was vaporized by it, Casey stared at the moon for a moment wondering what the point of that was, he then turned around and saw two giant pure yellow eyes where staring at him

"(&(\*^%&((&(("

It was the same voice from the dream version of the hole just before the Shadow Stalker had told Casey to come and find him "Who the eff are you!? What do you want with Mae?!"

"(\*^^\*0%\*&"

Casey stepped closer to the eyes "Answer me!"

"(\*(\*(\*("

Casey continued to walk closer to the eyes until he was standing at the edge of the roof "I'll say it again. What do you want!?"

Suddenly the yellow eyes flashed a bright yellow and a white fish flew down from the sky and down towards Casey, he passed right through the fish and once it left he felt like all of his energy had been

sucked from him to the point he was shaking **"Casey Hartley, I can only presume that you can understand me now."**

Casey felt the same pit in his stomach from before return "Y- Y- I- Wh- Who- Wha-?"

**"Good. Now we can talk."**

Casey backed away from the edge of the roof and the eyes "A- A- About w- w- what?"

**"You see I've recently given, your friend, Margaret Borowski, a proposition but she refused it. The only problem with that is, we both can't afford to have her decline my offer, so I want, I NEED, your help. I need you to convince her to trust me, to accept my offer."**

Casey's mouth felt dry as if all of the moisture in it had been sucked out "W- What is the o- offer?"

**"That is only for Mae to know... Now then I do know that it is hard to help someone with something when you don't even know what they want help with but you must trust me, it is only for the benefit for of Mae, for you, for your world. And my own."**

Casey felt like he couldn't get enough air into his lungs so he took longer and stronger breaths "H- How can I h- help you i- if I can n- never leave that world?"

**"I can free you... That is of course you accept my offer to help me."**

"I- I- I-"

Suddenly he could hear the sound of someone gasp "CASEY!?"

He turned around and looked up at one of the giant smoke stacks and he saw Mae standing on top of it. Mae jumped down from the smoke stack and landed next to Casey, she looked exactly like him, she glowed the same colors in the same areas, she quickly pulled Casey into a hug and he returned it feeling himself calm down. Casey looked over to the giant yellow eyes "If you want to get Mae to do

something tell it to her our self!"

Mae looked at Casey confused "Who are you talking to?"

Casey looked at her just as confused "The giant floating pure yellow eyes that are literally right over there."

He pointed his finger at the eyes and looked at them as well and Mae followed his finger "I don't see anything..."

**"She cannot see me Hartley, you are the only one. In fact, you're currently communicating with a future version of Mae."**

The color in Casey's face left again "What?"

Mae started to grow more confused "What? What's going on? What's wrong?"

**"That's right Casey, she is from the not so distant future, not only that but. She's not even truly real."**

Casey looked at Mae again "Mae?"

She then fell limp, Casey caught her before she hit then ground and she dissolved into a bunch of various shapes right in his arms. He looked at the yellow eyes again "What did you do?!"

**"I'm not stupid Hartley, I know that if you were to accept my offer and help me, you would eventually find out what I want from Mae and you would turn against me, so I cannot let you make a conscious effort to help me, I must break your mind so that I can mold it like putty and make you think that everything from this point on is nothing more then a dream, I will make you think that everything you do will never have any consequences.. It is the only way Casey, the. Only. Way."**

The train town then disappeared, the blue moon disappeared, the white fish disappeared, the yellow eyes disappeared, Casey was alone, floating in the infinite void that look like space, everything started to fade to black as Casey started to close his eyes "I. Got. To. Remember. That... It's... Just... A... Dream."

Casey finally closed his eyes and he floated through the space like void lost completely to the fake dream world created by whatever those eyes were attached to.

## 10. Fake Eyes

Casey slowly opened his eyes and sat up, he looked around the room he was in, it was kinda familiar to him. The walls were a dark oak in color and so were the floors, over to his right was a window which showed him that he was in a forest, he could also see through the trees that it was early morning and the sky was clear, over in the right corner was a tall lamp that was on. Casey looked over to his left and saw that there was a bed next to him, he then looked down at himself and saw that he was in a blue sleeping bag, he stood up and saw that he only had on his boxers and a white tee shirt, Casey then looked back over to his left. The bed had a blue bed sheets on it with a white pillow sitting exactly where it should be, the covers looked like someone had just gotten out of bed and so did the pillow, over the bed on the right wall was a painting, the painting showed a beach at dusk with an umbrella placed in the sand, Casey then looked over to the wall in front of him and saw that there was a computer desk setting against the wall, and of course there was a complete computer set on top of the desk.

Casey heard the door to the room open "Good you're awake, time for breakfast."

Casey was still extremely sleepy so he didn't quite understand "W-um, What?"

Whoever stood in the door way chuckled "I always forget how much of a zombie you are when you wake up... I said that breakfast is ready! Also! Just in case it takes you a while to remember, you're at Jack's place! My place!... Now get your butt a moving so we can eat."

Casey rubbed his eyes and thought to himself "*Wait... I'm at Jack's place? Does that mean that?... NO! NO NO NO! This is a dream, or vision, or weird torturer thing that those yellow eyes created so he could use me... but, I really want some food so... I'll play along until then.*"

Casey nodded "Yeah I'm coming."

Jack smiled "Finally."

Casey followed Jack out into the dining room. Jack was a brown chipmunk, he also had white strips running along his backside, he kept his tail trimmed and in check so it wasn't all that bushy, Jack was wearing a pair of blue lounge pants and no shirt, Casey sat down at the table and waited for Jack to return with the food. While Casey waited he thought to himself *"So... If this is really a dream-thingy, then what do I do after breakfast? Do I just like, do nothing? Like go back to my house, head up into my room, and just sit in my bed all day and night hoping that I piss off mister eyes and he just lets me go? Or do I try to fight back? He said that He's gonna try to make me think that everything after this is nothing but a dream, that I can do anything without it coming back to haunt me, which means I can kill anyone I wanted to and no one would stop me... So do I like... Treat these dreams like reality, just live in this world as if it's real life? But what if THAT doesn't stop him? Is my only option really letting him break my mind so he can use me to convince Mae to work with-"*

Jack then walked back into the room holding two plates of waffles with each plate being in a different hand "What you wanna do today?"

Jack reentering the room holding food, and his question broke Casey out of his thoughts "Hmm? Oh! I dunno yet. First let's eat."

Jack smiled and put the plates down on the table before sitting down in front of Casey. The two ate in silence, Jack was busy readying a book he had grabbed from his room, and Casey was back in his realm of thought *"NO! That's not gonna work either! AGH! Wish I could just shoot my way out of here!"*

Jack looked up from his book and over to Casey "Got any idea what you wanna do today?"

Yet again Casey was broken out of his thoughts "Um... Yeah, I just wanna kinda look around town today, just see where the day takes me."

Jack nodded "K... Do you have any idea where the day is gonna be taking you?"

Casey rolled his eyes and took a bite of his waffle "No, that's not



how it works."

Jack shrugged "I know. Just kinda wanted to spend some more time with you... I haven't seen you in a few weeks and you haven't really kept in touch recently."

Casey sighed "I know, I know... It's just that with Mae heading off to college I had a lot to do."

Jack raised an eyebrow "Like what?"

Casey took another bite of his waffle "I wanted to get some more band practice in before she headed off, my mom wanted me to write a going away song for Mae so I did that for a bit, then Steve wanted me to get something for him so I did that for a bit... Basically I've been busy for a while. And yes I'm sorry for not hanging out with you more but, you know how I am.. I don't plan a lot of stuff, I just kinda let the wind guide me to a destination... You know."

Jack glared at Casey "Don't do it."

"SK8 AND DESTROY! SK8 2 CR8! BOUND FOR GLORY!"

Jack closed his eyes and groaned "Goddammit Hartley..."

Jack had always hated that, he would always say that he could hear Casey say the eights and twos he also said that it was cheesy. Casey chuckled at Jack as he was still recovering from the "cheesy" sayings that Casey had come up with, suddenly Casey realized something *"I almost forgot... I almost forgot that this isn't real, that I can't let this become real."*

The smile faded from Casey's face just as Jack opened his eyes again "Hey. You good?"

Casey looked up from the floor and over to Jack "Yeah. I just wanted to find out where I wanted to head to first in town."

Jack grinned "I thought you wanted the wind to guide you."

Casey rolled his eyes "I have to start somewhere don't I?"

Jack nodded "I guess so... You done with that?"

Casey looked at his plate, there was only a little piece of waffle left "Yeah."

Jack nodded again and stood up, he picked up both of their plates and headed over to the kitchen to clean them off. After Jack finished cleaning off the plates he headed back into his bedroom and tossed Casey his clothes just before Jack closed his bedroom door to change, as Casey put on his clothes he continued to think to himself *"I can't forget, I can't forget, I can't forget! Can't forget the eyes, can't forget that this is a dream or something like that, I can't forget any of that. NONE OF IT!"*

Jack then opened his bedroom door and walked over to Casey, he was now wearing a blue long sleeve shirt, brown cargo shorts, and grey sandals "You ready?"

Casey looked down at his fully clothed self and then back at Jack "What do you think?"

Jack rolled his eyes "Yeah okay. So any idea where we're heading to first?"

Casey took a second to think "Um... How about, we just look around Towne Centre?"

Jack also nodded "Okay."

And with that the two walked out of Jack's cabin in the woods to head over to Towne Centre so they could just look around and so that Casey could hopefully cement the fact that this world isn't real into his mind. Eventually after a very silent walk the two reached Towne Centre, Casey glanced around looking at all of the buildings and everyone walking around realizing how much he missed the real Possum Springs he even missed the memorial thing in the center of the small section of town they were in. Jack looked over to Casey "You wanna take a look around the Party Barn?"

Casey looked over to Jack "Sure."

Then the two entered the party supplies store, the store had isle after

isle of well party stuff, at the back of the store was an area called the Birthday Party Zone in that area was a stage that the store used whenever someone would host a party there. Jack led Casey down one of the aisles which was filled with nothing but goody bag candies "I don't know about you but my sweet tooth has been acting up for a long time. You want any?"

Casey grinned as Jack grabbed a hand full of salt water taffy looking candies "We can get an entire bucket full of candy at the Food Donkey, and it'll be cheaper too."

Jack nodded slightly as he stuffed the taffy like candies into his pocket and using his other hand grabbed another hand full of lollipop "True, but we both know that there's just something about candy meant for a birthday party that makes it seem sweeter than regular candy."

Casey rolled his eyes "Whatever you say... But if you're buying then I want some Tootsie Rolls."

Jack stuffed his hand full of lollipops into his other pocket before grabbing another hand full of Tootsie Rolls and then handed them to Casey "I'll buy em' but you gotta hold em'."

Casey sighed as Jack dropped the hand full of candy into Casey's cupped hands "Fine."

The two then walked over to the cashier to buy their "sweeter than normal" candies, as Casey approached the cash register he was hit by a wave of remembrance? yeah remembrance *"This isn't real... I'm still in the old gas station in that upside down version of Possum Springs, I can't keep forgetting! Why do I keep forgetting!?"*

"Hey Casey! You put them up there or not?"

Casey was snapped out of his thoughts and saw that he was just standing there still holding his candies "Oh.. yeah, sorry."

He then placed the candies on the cashier counter and the guy behind the register gave both Casey and Jack a sort of "Really? You almost adult in age guys are buying hand fulls of candy?" But Casey wasn't

paying attention to him, or really anything at the moment he just kept repeating one thing over and over again in his head "*This isn't real.*"

He kept on repeating it over and over again trying to cement the fact into his brain again so Casey just kinda stood there staring at nothing when Jack nudged Casey's shoulder "W- What?"

Jack nodded his head over to the entrance to the store "Don't look now."

Casey rolled his eyes "Goddammit Jack you now that when you say don't look now to someone they always look."

Casey then looked over to the store's front doors and saw that walking through it was none other than his ex girlfriend Stacy Newman, she was a cream brown colored deer, she wore a dark blue top with black shorts and a pair of bright white, sparkly sandals Jack nudged Casey's back as he pulled out his wallet to pay for the candies "Go over there."

Casey wanted to protest but his mouth wouldn't make any kind of words of protest so he just walked over to Stacy who was heading into an isle dedicated to birthday decorations. She picked up a package of paper towels and inspected them while Casey finally reached her side "Uh h- hi."

She looked over to Casey "Casey? Casey Hartley?"

He nodded "Heh, yeah it's me."

She surprisingly grew a smile on her face "What are you doing here?"

He nodded his head over to Jack who was currently putting all of the candies into a plastic bag "We're just walking around town and came in here to buy some candy."

She raised an eyebrow "You do know that you could just by some at the Food Donkey and it's be cheaper, right?"

He nodded "I told Jack that but he says that the candy here is sweeter."

She snorted "Well it kinda is?"

He sighed remembering that Stacy had a nasty habit of finishing her sentences as questions "You're doing it again."

She took a moment to figure out what Casey meant "Ooh, sorry? Ahem I mean sorry."

He grinned "Why do you do that?"

She shrugged "Ever since I turned eleven? Eleven. I just kinda started doing it."

He shrugged "Ever since I turned eleven I've woken up like a zombie."

She snorted again "I mean, at a certain age you start doing that. But at eleven?"

He nodded and realized that Stacy must've unlike hi came into the Party Barn with an intent to buy something "What did you come in here for? Like what is it you came in here to buy?"

She looked down at her hand still holding the package of paper towels which Casey now say had confetti pictures on them "Oh! Yeah, heh. I came in here to buy stuff for my son's party."

His eyes widened in shock "Son?"

She nodded "Yeah, It'll be his first birthday and I want to make it special.. Casey are you okay?"

His face had gone pale and he was staggering backwards he tried to say something but it only came out as an incoherent mumble and he eventually passed out and fell backwards. Casey opened his eyes gasping for air, he took a look around and saw that he was back in that space looking void from before except this time he was floating in the air, and just over head was the two yellow eyes "**Hmmm. This is new never before has someone broken out of one of those so easily.**"

Casey looked up at the yellow eyes "What do you mean?"

The eyes came closer to Casey **"What I mean is that one simple word broke you out of that world, and I don't know how."**

Casey tried to back away from the eyes but he didn't know how to move while floating in the air "Do you mean the fact that Stacy had a kid in that world?"

The yellow eyes remained silent for a moment **"Interesting... It seems that somehow, I have accidentally let real world events seep into my world."**

Casey's eyes widened in shock again "She actually has a kid?!"

The eyes came a little closer to Casey **"Yes, she does indeed have a child in reality, but do not ask me who the father is because I do not care who the father is so I wouldn't know."**

Casey rubbed his face trying to figure out what was going on "...Just... Let me the eff go! Let me leave! I already have it cemented in my mind that the world I was just in isn't real!"

The two eyes chuckled **"You say that, yet it takes longer and longer for you to remember that fact of yours, eventually you will forget and you WILL help me."**

It was taking Casey longer to remember that but he couldn't give in he had to hold out "Leave me alone! You, you, you... Jerk!"

Casey slowly opened his eyes, he was lying in someone's lap and he was staring up at the Party Barn's ceiling and his vision was blurry, eventually his vision returned to normal and saw that Stacy was standing over him with a concerned look on her face so he must've hopefully been in Jack's lap "Oh my god Casey are you alright!?"

Casey groaned as he rubbed the side of his head "Yeah.. I'm fine."

He could hear Jack scoff "Yeah, because passing out for no reason is fine."

Casey tried to sit up but Stacy and Jack both quickly made him lay back down "Guys I'm fine!"

Jack chuckled "That doesn't matter at this point. I already called for some paramedics."

Casey sighed "Dude, I'm effing fine!"

Stacy scoffed "You're not fine Casey Hartley!"

He suddenly stood upright at the same time he remembered that this world wasn't real *"There's gotta be a way out of here!... It's a bad idea, but. Even if it doesn't work at least the eyes won't be able to use me anymore."*

Jack stood up clearly angry "Casey! Dude you just passed out and standing up as fast as you did could've made you pass out again!"

Casey didn't pay any attention to Jack or Stacy and he quickly ran out of the Party Barn, once outside he turned to his left and started to run towards the area of town where his house was while Jack and Stacy chased after Casey yelling at him to stop. Casey burst through the front door of his house which surprised his parents who were both sitting in the living room watching TV they both looked over to Casey and spoke in unison "Casey? What's wrong?"

Casey just kinda glanced at them before running over to the basement door and ran down the stairs at the same time Jack and Stacy entered the house "Where's Casey?!"

His parents both stood up and led the other two into the basement where they saw Casey load a magazine into a pistol, Jack ran over to Casey "Dude! What are you doing?!"

Casey shoved Jack away from him "Let me leave! Or I'm gonna paint the walls red!"

Everyone looked at Casey both concerned and confused and Casey's mom spoke up "Casey? Are you okay?"

He didn't pay any attention to her and he cocked the pistol before placing it against the side of his head "Last. Effing. Warning! Let me go or else!"

Everyone ran over to Casey so they could stop him and Jack yelled at

Casey "Dude! Come on! We can talk this out! Whatever is making you put a gun to your head we can help you with!"

And Jack tried to pull the arm Casey had the pistol in away from his head but before he could Casey pulled the trigger. Casey heard the sound of the gun shot ring through his ears, he heard the sound of everyone in the room scream as the gun fired, but one voice stood out to him, it was the voice of the yellow eyes, he was also yelling, then the bullet went through Casey's head. Casey stood alone in a multicolored version of his basement, the walls were a neon purple in color, the floor was a slightly darker neon blue, and any other item in the basement was a different neon color, everything glowed their neon colors but it still seemed dark in their as if the light coming off of everything was just for aesthetic. Casey looked at himself and saw that he was glowing the same colors from when he was in the space like void where the yellow eyes seemed to live, he looked to his right and saw the pistol suspended in mid air, it glowed a pale cyan in color, he also saw the mini explosion a gun created to propel bullets which glowed a bright orange coming out of the gun as well.

Then a ghostly image of the two yellow eyes appeared in front of him **"Casey Hartley... It seems as though you have out smarted me... By killing your self in my world you have prevented me from breaking your mind due to the fact that I cannot return you there because believe it or not the other people that live in that world, believe that they live in the real world, so if I brought you back from the dead you would be viewed as a zombie by the people of the town... Again, Casey Hartley you have outsmarted me. Take your gas canister, take your lighter."**

Suddenly the red gas canister from the gas station, and the candle lighter from before appeared in his hands **"And leave."**

As soon as Casey blinked he found himself back in the gas station, standing directly in front of the door, still holding the gas canister and lighter, he was back, and he didn't know if he should be happy about it. Casey walked outside walked into the woods so he could get back to the party spot where H-G was hopefully still at.



## 11. The Finale Shadows

Casey jogged through the woods head back to the party spot where H-G was still at, he still held the gas canister and candle lighter from before in his hands. Although he tried not to remember the strange series of events that just happened they still replayed through his mind almost like they were trying to torture him for something, he could still hear the sound of the yellow eye's echo through his mind, he could still hear the sound of the gun shot that let him leave that strange world echo through his mind. Casey shook his head which let his mind get focused on the task ahead, killing the Shadow Stalker, or die trying "Don't think like that... Who am I kidding, that guy is a literal monster and I'm some guy from a small town. I might as well die here."

But Casey continued heading forwards despite his own self deprecating words. It took him just as much time to get back from the gas station as it was to get there but it seemed longer due to the almost traumatic memories that plagued his mind, but once he did reach the party spot he saw that H-G was asleep in a chair he had set back on it's legs, the chair and H-G where sitting in front of the fire pit where the Shadow Stalker was currently resting, Casey walked over to the sleeping hallucination and placed the gas canister on the ground next to himself, he then poked H-G on the head "H-G, wake up."

H-G stirred slightly "I'm... I'm... A... G- Good."

Casey raised an eyebrow at H-G's words "Dude, wake up."

H-G flinched slightly "Don't... Say... That."

Casey sighed "Last warning. Wake up."

H-G's head slumped forwards "Fine."

Casey then shoved H-G's chair over and it took H-G with it down towards the ground. Once H-G hit the ground his eye's opened quickly in panic and he just as quickly stood up "DUDE! WHAT THE EFF?!"

Casey shrugged "You wouldn't wake up."

H-G struggled to find out what to say next so instead he resorted to just growling at Casey which made the cat smile, Casey picked up the gas canister and showed H-G both it and the lighter "I got what we need."

H-G didn't look to excited but that was probably because he was still mad at Casey "Cool... Now what?"

Casey looked over to the fire pit "Now, we cover it in gasoline, set it on fire, and see what happens next."

H-G also looked over to the fire pit "I'm not too sure about this now."

Casey sighed "Wasn't ever sure, but it's really the only option.. Of course other then die."

H-G grinned "Wouldn't want that."

Casey nodded and walked over to the fire pit, he then squatted down inspecting the ashes that covered both the pit and the Stalker. Casey took the cap off of the gas canister and stood up, he then tipped the canister over and started to pour gasoline on top of the ashes and the Stalker, while he was pouring gas he circled around the fire pit making sure almost every inch was covered, once the canister was finished Casey stepped back from the fire pit and stood next to H-G "Think that'll do."

H-G rubbed the top of his head "This is gonna be fun.."

Casey then set the gas canister down and walked over to the fire pit, he then turned the candle lighter on and touch the flame on a spot covered in gasoline and it immediately caught fire, in fact it ignited so fast it made Casey jump back. The fire spread across the fire pit fast and soon there was a large bonfire sitting directly in front of Casey and H-G with the Shadow Stalker still under the burning ashes, H-G looked over to Casey "Do you think that... Just setting him on fire made him die... Instantly?"

Casey sighed "Oh I effing wish it was that simple and if it is I'm gonna cry, but I highly doubt it. I don't know why he's waiting down there

but I don't think we killed him instan-"

Suddenly a large gust of wind erupted from the fire pit and into the air, in the gust of wind was the Shadow Stalker in it's mist form, it then flew off into a shadowy area of the party spot and turned into it's Casey form. Casey grabbed his M16 and ran towards the Stalker and H-G followed picking up a small tree branch off of the ground as he ran, Casey fired a few shots at the Shadow Stalker but it quickly turned into it's mist form and used it's strange wind power to pull Casey in close, it then went into Casey's lungs by entering his nose and mouth. Casey gasped for air almost collapsing from the sudden lack of oxygen, H-G's eyes widened and grabbed the hood of Casey's hoodie and pulled him closer to the fire, the Stalker then exited Casey and turned into it's Casey form hissing and steam rising from it's body. Casey took in a deep breath of air before grabbing his hand gun and shooting at the Stalker, while H-G ran over to monster's side and started to hit it with the tree branch he still had in his hand, Casey struggled to find a good time to fire so he would hit the Stalker and not H-G due to the Stalker running from both H-G and Casey "Dude! What are you doing?!"

H-G looked over to Casey while still hitting and chasing after the Stalker "I don't know! I've never been in a fight like this before!"

Casey then quickly fired another shot at the Stalker and the bullet just barely missed H-G's left hand but it did hit the Stalker causing it to hiss in pain. The Stalker quickly jumped into the shadow of a tree and turned back into it's mist form and quickly flew up into the air, Casey shot at the mist as it flew into the air not really caring that it wasn't doing, Casey ran over to H-G who was standing next to the shadow of the tree staring at the mist as it flew away "Did it just... Run from the battle?"

Casey clenched one of his fists "I hope not."

Then suddenly a tree landed in front of the bonfire on the side next to Casey and H-G blocking the light from the fire, then the Shadow Stalker in it's mist form flew towards Casey, H-G quickly jumped in front of Casey and intercepted the Stalker's attack, the mist hit H-G directly in the face but it quickly backed away from H-G who then ran at the Stalker holding the tree branch in the air ready to swing at

it, but when H-G was close enough the Shadow Stalker turned halfway into it's Casey form, from the waist down it was still mist, but from it's waist up it was all Casey and every part of it's body emitted black smoke, it then smacked H-G with the back of it's left hand and sent H-G flying towards the right. H-G hit a tree and broke right through it' bark, but he didn't stop there, something felt different when he hit the tree but he couldn't see what it was due to his eyes being closed in pain, the air felt cooler, the wind smelt better, it also seemed to be warmer then before, it was almost peaceful. But that peace was then broken when H-G felt himself tumble across dirt and rocks, after a while he then feel's himself skid across something that felt rocky and came to a stop.

H-G laid there on his stomach groaning in pain eyes still shut, it didn't feel like any bones were broken, nor did it feel like he'd have any lasting injures somehow but that didn't mean hitting a tree and tumbling across the ground wasn't painful, H-G opened his eyes slowly and saw sitting directly in front of his face was a bird, a raven by the looks of it, but how? There wasn't any ravens in that upside down world, was he? H-G stood up and the bird backed away slightly and H-G looked around, he was in the real world! The sun was shining, and it was a sunny day, not a could in sight, everything was so vibrant in color, he was even happy to hear the sounds of various insects flying around, the raven cawed at H-G and flew up onto his left shoulder "Wow, you really like me for some reason- WAIT! I'M REAL?! WITHOUT BEING NEAR THE STALKER?!"

He then looked straight ahead of himself and saw that there was a tree with a large hole in it, on the other side of the hole was the upside down world, when he hit the tree he went right through it and came out on the other side in a completely different reality. He made a gate way between the two worlds! H-G smiled like a mad man, he then heard the sound of a horn being honked and looked to his right, heading straight towards him was a semi truck, H-G's eyes widened in shock and he jumped out of the way of the truck landing on the side of the road in front of him, he landed on his side and as the truck passed H-G heard the gruff and gravelly voice of the trucker driving it yell "Get outa the middle of the road, jackass!"

Then the raven landed on top of H-G's head "...Is this how you get

pets?"

The raven then cawed almost as if it was telling H-G that yes, this is how you get pets. H-G stood up and the raven flew off of his head and quickly landed on H-G's left shoulder again, he then ran over to the hole between the two worlds, in the middle of the tree where wood was normally there was instead that weird, fleshy, fungus-y stuff that all of those vines were made out of, it almost looked like somebody's guts. H-G climbed into the hole and the raven walked onto H-G's back and kinda squatted down slightly to avoid the strange material, H-G reached the other side but fell onto the ground which caused the raven to fall off of his back, as H-G stood up so did the raven and it cawed at H-G in anger, but H-G didn't care instead he was focused on Casey, who was currently gasping for air, his vines a very dark charcoal black in color, he was squat down on his knees, the M16 was sitting in two pieces next to a tree, and the hand gun sat directly in front of H-G's pet? raven. Casey turned his head and looked at H-G gasping desperately for air, H-G ran over to Casey stepping over the raven and the handgun as he did, and just as he reached Casey the cat passed out from lack of oxygen and fell into H-G's arms "Casey!"

"Casey. Hartley."

He opened his eyes and found himself standing in a black void, and standing in front of him was the Shadow Stalker except it wasn't pure black, instead it was the same color as Casey but much darker as if it was covered in shadow "I. Know. That. The. Worst. Way. To. Die. Is. To. Die. With. Unanswered. Questions. So. Before. I. Kill. You. So. I. Can. Become. You. I. Will. Let. You. Ask. Me. Any. Questions."

Casey clenched his fists "Why do you want to become me so badly?"

"Because. I. Want. Purpose. Again... Before. When. Many. Creatures. Lived. In. My. World. I. Would. Go. Around. Taking. Many. Forms. And. Cause. Chaos. But. Now. That. It. Is. Survival of the fittest. There. Are. Very. Few. Creatures. To. Harass."

Casey felt two different things, first was that he did not want to see that world "teeming with life", and second was that he almost felt sorry for the Stalker in the sense that he kinda went through what he

was going through, a few months before Mae went off to college he believed that he had lost his place in the world, so to try and find it and a purpose again he was gonna run from home, but when he got the news Mae was heading off to get a higher education he realized that his purpose was that he was gonna be there for her when she got back... Of course now, he might not ever get to do that "Okay... Why did you create H-G?"

"I. Wanted. To. See. How. You. Interacted. With. Your. Friends. In. A. Strange. And. New. Environment."

Was that really all H-G was meant for? what would happen if Casey was in some sort of nightmare world and he had Gregg with him? What a shitty purpose in life "Have. All. Of. Your. Questions. Been. Answered?"

Casey didn't say anything "I. Take. That. As. A. Yes... Now. It's. Time. To. Finish. This."

The Stalker then lunged at Casey and covered him in a black smoke screen. Black Smoke started to leave Casey's nose, ears, eyes, and mouth. It then started to swirl around Casey and caused H-G to back away from him, eventually Casey was completely blocked by a swirling vortex of black smoke, the wind created by the vortex kicked up dirt, rocks, leaves, and small twigs all of which hit H-G several times, all the while the raven struggled to keep its feet on the ground it cawed at the air as if it was yelling at it to stop, then the vortex's winds started to pick up in power, it was almost knocking H-G off of his feet and had sent the raven flying, literally, into the air, then it picked up the tree that blocked the bonfire's now dimming light and tossed it somewhere far away from the party spot. Eventually the vortex started to slow down and dissipate, and after a few seconds it was completely gone and so were the winds, now where the vortex was once, there sat two Caseys, the real Casey, and the Shadow Stalker in its Casey form.

The Stalker looked over to the fire and hissed as steam started to rise from its body, it then started to crawl away from Casey and fire heading towards a shadow cast by a tree, H-G bent down and grabbed the handgun and at the same time the raven flew back over to him and landed next to H-G, he tried to shoot the gun but there

wasn't any bullets in the magazine so it just clicked each time H-G pulled the trigger, as the Stalker crawled over to the shadows his body started to steam more and more and it's limbs seemed to become stiffer and stiffer, eventually he was literally dragging it's self to just get to the shadows, eventually he was coming closer and closer but at the same time his body started to turn into ash and crumbled away, he then reached it's right hand out to the shadows at the same time it's head turned to ash, and just mere seconds before his entire body turned to ash his hand entered the shadow. It's entire body except for it's right hand crumbled into ash, after a second or two of the hand just sitting their in the shadows the ashes that once was the body of the Stalker emitted black smoke and the hand turned into smoke, both clouds of smoke came together to create the Stalker's mist form and it flew away into the cover of darkness, while H-G and Casey just watched it leave with no real way to stop it, H-G ran over to Casey and the raven followed him "Dude! How the eff did you survive.. Whatever that was?"

Casey shrugged "I honestly don't know, I just kinda resisted for awhile and, poof, here I am back in this... Weird, reality."

Casey then pointed to the raven "And what's with that?"

H-G looked at the bird "Oh yeah, well you remember when the Stalker launched me at that tree.. Well come to find out, that tree leads back to reality and while I was their this bird kinda came up to me and hasn't left me alone since... I'ma call him Seth."

Casey grinned "Seth.. Hallucination Gregg's pet raven. Wait. Did you say that the tree leads back to my home?! Like that hole your butt made can get me home?!"

H-G nodded grinning "Yeah!"

Tears started to form in Casey's eyes and he ran over to the tree with the interdenominational hole in it with H-G and Seth following him, he then felt a cool breeze come through it and it made Casey smile in bliss. After a little bit of blissfully feeling the cool winds of his home Casey looked over to H-G a concerned look on his face "What.. About you?"

H-G felt his heart sink realizing that he couldn't go with Casey "I- I can't come with you... It'll be, weird to have two different Greggs in one world even if I avoid him there's still that chance reality will start to collapse or something all because I'm in the same world as another Gregg."

Casey rubbed rubbed the top of his head with both of his hands "I- We- It might- Goddammit, I hate the fact that THAT is the only way to make sure everyone is safe!"

H-G sighed "I'll be fine Casey... I'll be fine here, nothing can hurt me, I know how to cook... Kinda, and I have Seth to keep me company. I'll- I'll be fine."

Tears started to build up in H-G and Casey's eyes "I'm- I'm gonna miss you, even though it sounds weird seeing as how, you're like. A ghost version of Gregg, I'm still gonna miss you."

H-G nodded tears starting to stream down his face "Me too."

He tried to hug Casey but his arms went through him "Heh, r- right."

The two started to giggle slightly before Casey waved and climbed through the hole. Casey emerged from the other side of the hole, he looked around the real world, he was near the side of the road in the middle of some forest, the grass had grown tall along with the flowers that was peppered around the area, the road was made out of cracked black asphalt, the cracks weren't large enough nor deep enough to cause a car's trip to become difficult but it would make it slightly bumpy, the sun that shown through the trees and onto the road felt great on Casey's fur, the air was cool and there was a nice breeze that bowed the grass and flowers downwards and made the leaves in the trees rustle, then a car of some sort drove past him along the road, the only thing he could make out was that it was blue in color. He walked over to the side of the road and looked both ways scan them, he then turned around and saw that despite the tree in that weird world being located in the party spot, the tree in the real world was somewhere else that wasn't the party spot, in fact the area around him didn't even look like Possum Springs, but that didn't matter to him right now, right now he was home, he was back in his home reality "I'm home..."



## The End!

There we go, Lost in the Upside Down completely remastered. This was a strange project I guess, but, it was kinda worth it. Seeing as how this story is the first installment of what I'm calling the "Beyond the Springs" AU, its kinda special. Alright that's all, see you in my next project...

## NitW: Beyond the Springs (REMASTERED)!